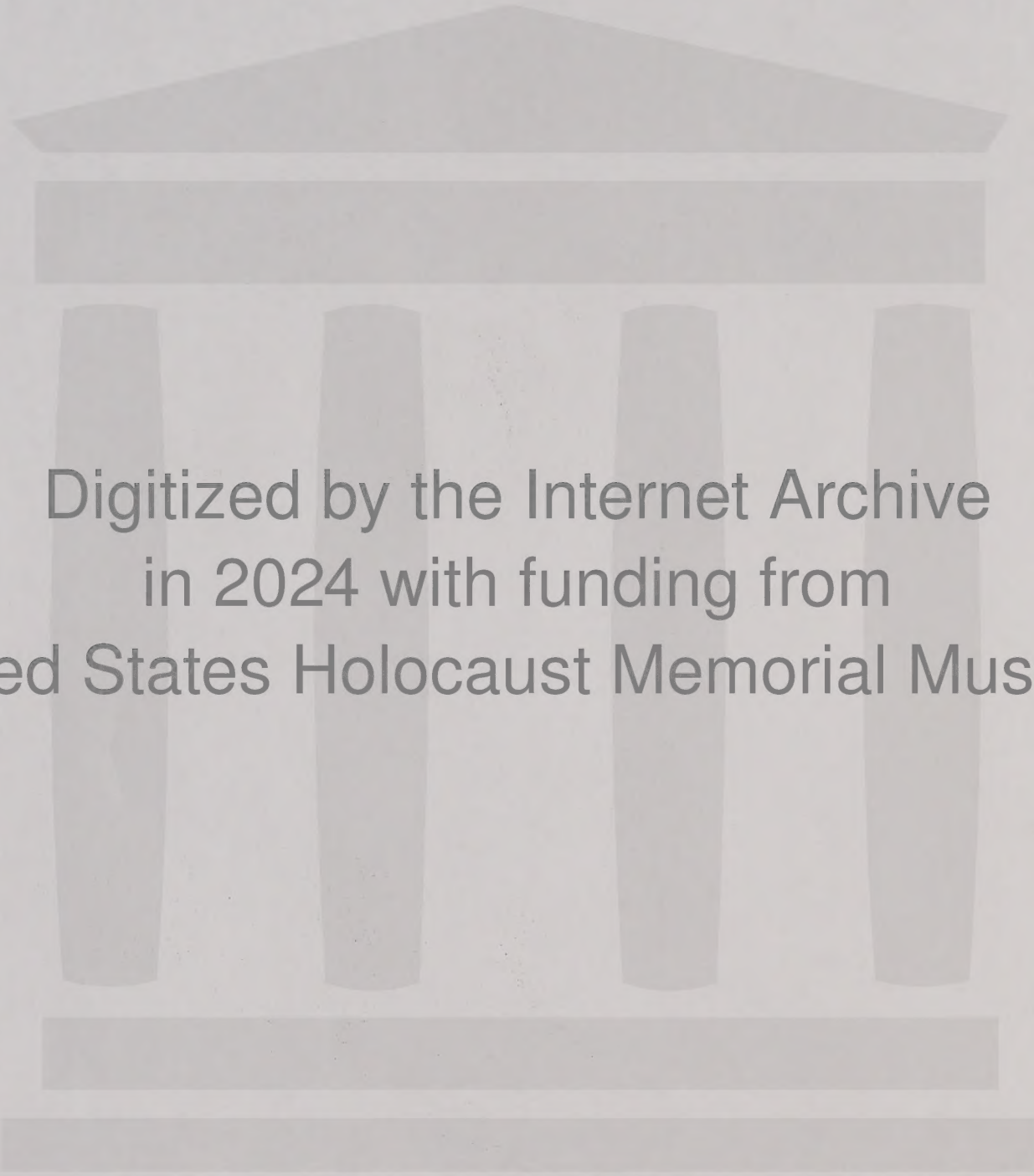




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I dedicate this book to my children, Juda and Arnon, and to ~~my~~ ^{Elyse, Michelle} grandchildren, David, Cheryl and Joelle, for their outpouring of love and support. It is they who represent our greatest victory in surviving HaShoah.

I wish to gratefully acknowledge the following people for their incredible support and assistance:

Our Rabbi, Avi Weiss, of the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale, whose love of humanity and Jewish pride and dignity gave me the encouragement to write the story of our life during HaShoah. Rabbi Weiss instilled the idea that future generations will learn how to work for peace and help their fellow man and people will not be persecuted because of their race, color or religion. His courage and dignity in speaking up for those who are persecuted is a model so worthy of emulating.

Let me mention Rabbi Emanuel Vinas and recognize his hard work as a Torah scribe, a sofer. During World War II, the Nazis destroyed so many sacred Torahs in Europe. Rabbi Vinas works late into the night restoring Torahs, which is surely a work of love. He is also helping Jews descended from Spanish speaking families reclaim their heritage.

We are grateful to the entire congregation of the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale, who have treated us so wonderfully, showing so much compassion and understanding for the survivors of HaShoah.

My thanks to my husband, Bernard Adler, who went through so much suffering in the hellish concentration camps of Auschwitz, Mathausen and Ebensee. For many years, it was so very hard for him to talk about the nightmarish year of 1944-1945. In recent years, he has bravely stepped forward to describe his terrible experiences in order to educate young people. Only in the last few years have I learned of his acts of human decency amidst such hell. As a tailor, he courageously helped save the life of many inmates, providing them with materials and cloth to wrap their feet, legs and bodies, so that they could keep warm and protect themselves against the endlessly bitter cold winter in KZ Ebensee, which was located in the Tyrolian Alps of Austria. When men from his village in Hungary became sick, he took them into his barrack, on the pretense that they would help him with his tailoring, to try to save their lives.

This book could not have been finished without the invaluable and tremendous assistance of my dear friend, Rita Lowenstein. I wish to extend my thanks and gratitude to Rita, for the love, sensitivity and understanding she showed in editing and typing my handwritten manuscript.

On behalf of my husband and I, and all our future generations, I would like to express our eternal gratitude to our liberators, the young volunteers of the Third Cavalry of General Patton's Third Army. These men, barely out of their teenage years fought through Europe suffering high casualties. On May 6, 1945, they drove their tanks to the gates of KZ Ebensee, liberating the camp and saving so many lives. While there are no words to express out thanks to all these brave soldiers, I wish to make special mention of Major Timothy Brennan, Sgt. Bob Persinger and Sgt. Dick Pomante. Like long-lost brothers, they and their families befriended us many years later and they have been a source of great comfort and friendship to us.

Finally, I wish to express my deepest love and appreciation of Gan Miriam at the Hebrew Institute, the pre-school where I have worked for many years with the young children of the congregation – our children, the next generation. The warm, nurturing atmosphere of the Gan has provided me with a renewed feeling of life, happiness and the assurance of Jewish continuity and survival for many generations to come. There, pre-school children are already learning about Jewish values, the importance of Shabbat and the holidays, love of the Torah and Ahavas Yisrael. Yasher Koach to the director of the Gan, Nurit Bacharach and the entire wonderful staff.

Am Yisrael Chai
Irene Adler
April 2001
Bronx, New York

Who will take care of the cat? Very often in my dreams, I am back in Hungary, in the little village of Revaranyos. I find myself in a large room in the house, the old house which was my home, where I lived with my parents, 4 sisters and one brother. In my dream, the house is empty, the rooms are filled up with boxes. I am calling out, but no one answers. I am alone. Where is my family?

Then I hear my husband's voice. He is waking me up. "You had a nightmare", he says. I wake up and am remembering what happened.

Fifty years ago, during World War II, the wind of hate blew through Europe. It reached large cities, towns and villages. It came to my native village of Revaranyos, from where my family was taken away with the other Jews of the village.

The Hungarian gendarme and the SS soldiers took them. They never came back. The evil German SS machinery killed men, women and children.

After World War II ended, in 1945, orphans and widows were wandering by the thousands in DP camps. People were searching for family members and friends. We were hungry and sick. But the human spirit did survive. The war, the concentration and forced labor camps and the cruelty could never destroy love, faith, religion and hope.

I am remembering back in my childhood. We lived in a little house. Near the large garden in the big backyard, there was a large house where my grandparents lived. In the garden, we had a beautiful apple orchard, pear trees, 3 large walnut trees and plum trees. I am remembering as a young child, going down to our garden very often and looking up at the trees. I thought myself the most lucky, and very happy.

I asked my father, "Who planted those beautiful walnut trees?" And with shining eyes, he proudly told me his grandfather, Ferenc Klein, who was born in this house and lived in the village all of his life,

planted the walnut trees and garden.

So my family, back to my great grandfather's time, took good care of the house and the garden. We also had two vegetable and one rose gardens. Every spring we planted the flowers and when summer came, all the roses blossomed. We had a large backyard. From our garden, I could see wheat fields miles away and in the horizon, I saw the Carpathian mountains.

Revaranyos was a little village at the Czechoslovakian border. The population was about 700 people. The roads were dirt roads. Just the main road was paved, which ran through the village.

There were two churches, the Catholic and the Presbyterian. There were two one-room schoolhouses run by the churches. There was no heat, no running water, no electricity.

The larger part of the population were farmers, making their living working in the fields. Every family had a few acres of land. The houses in the village all looked alike. In every house, there were two bedrooms and a kitchen inbetween, plus a large veranda. The rooms had dirt floors. The village people worked very hard to keep their houses neat and clean. But village life, with all of its difficulties, was a happy one. There were benches in front of the houses. On Sunday afternoon and holidays, people sat outside together and told long stories.

Sometimes we listened to the radio. AND there were always books to read. The reverend of the Presbyterian church had a library. We always borrowed books. The river Tisza ran through our village. Summertime, we went down to swim or go rowboating. On the roadside, there were trees. We took long walks in the evenings on the tree-lined streets with our friends.

The railroad went through the village, but we did not have a station. We had to walk 3 miles to the next village. Cars were very

seldom seen. People drove horse or cow-drawn carriages. Newspapers arrived in the village every day. But the village events were already known, as the town's newsman would come around late afternoon. He told the major events of the village, which had come directly from the mayor's office.

I can still picture where I lived, with my parents and grandparents. My father was a tall man, with a beard and sidelocks. He wore a long black coat on Shabbat and working clothes during the week. I remember him as a cheerful, good natured man. He was very religious.

He taught me the Hebrew alphabet when I was 5 years old. The daily prayers, he repeated with me. BUT most importantly, he taught us how to help others. He was known as the village's most respected man by both, Jews and Gentiles.

I remember a shoemaker in our village with a large family. He was very poor. He did not know his trade well and people did not give him work. My father supported him, always bringing in shoes that needed to be repaired. My father would say, "If people will see that I go to him, perhaps others will follow me."

My mother was a pleasant, quiet woman. She was well-educated and was interested in Hungarian literature. I am grateful to her for my early interest in books and world events. BUT most of all, I am thankful for the love she always showed us in those difficult years. She never lost her patience.

My oldest sister, Margit, helped my mother take care of us. She was a dressmaker. Margit was a tall woman, with a pretty complexion. My next sister, Ilonka, was a beauty who was also very popular. She used to manage our store. Ernő, my brother, was the third child. He

studied in a Yeshiva and would come home for the high holidays. Next came Rozsi, the most ambitious in the family. She studied in Munkacz. After finishing school, she went to Chermajor to learn how to be a milk cultivator. We had a very deep love for each other. The only one to survive the camps from my family was my sister Neche. I always thank G-d that she came home to me. Our love for each other grew deeper as the years went by.

The village synagogue was located in our house. All ~~11~~ Jewish families would come over to pray. My great grandfather built it. On Shabbat and holidays, the men would come to pray. But on weekdays, everyone prayed at home. Hearing the chanting of the prayers as a child was the most beautiful music to my ears. On Shabbat afternoon, the men would come to study. I remember watching the little boys as they held onto their fathers and grandfathers hands. The tradition to study Torah was passed down from older to younger generation.

Shabbat was my favorite day. Every Friday afternoon my sister, Neche, and I used to scrub the synagogue's floor, line up the benches and put the prayer books in order. When the men arrived on Friday night, everything looked nice and clean. The candles burned in silver candlesticks and the prayers, which came from the heart, were soft and beautiful.

I remember how all week long I would think about my Shabbat shoes, which would be nicely shined, and my dress, which was always washed and ironed. I would visit my father in the Shul during the service. He would give me a prayer book and point out the page, during the years. I knew many prayers by heart.

My family was so proud about having the village synagogue in our house. And one of the Torahs was a family treasure over many generations.

During summertime, on Shabbat afternoon, my father used to sit on the veranda. Before him were siddurim. He studied the Gemara and quoted Zugte Gemara, in Hungarian, the wise words of the Sages. At my young age, I felt my father's love to study and I patiently sat near him, listening closely, while feeling proud to be his daughter. During long hours of studying, his hands supported his head, his glasses slipped off and I would see that he had fallen asleep. At that point, I would **quietly** leave to play with my friends.

Many of my friends would come to Shul, like Moshe Goldstein and Hersu Friesch. On Shabbat afternoon, Mosheti's sister, Ancika, came as well as my dearest friend Margitka Pongoratz. During the summer, we went to the Shul room and took a nap on the benches. Late afternoon, we went to visit families with young children. Sometimes we walked down to the river Tisza. The best time I had as a youngster was when I would babysit for a Chasidic family, the Beck family. They had 5 children-- Sajele, Malkele, Majlechle, Chersele and the baby.

During the years, I grew so close to them that now, while I am writing and remembering them, I cannot control my tears. It hurts so much that the children along with their parents lost their lives at the hands of the cruel Nazis.

In the early 1930's, my life in the village was pleasant. I had many friends among the village youngsters, both boys and girls, especially the girl Margit Pongoratz, who lived across the street from me. We grew up together. She had a younger brother whose name was Elemér. Margit's grandparents lived in the U.S.A. When she was 8 years old, she visited them. Her father stayed to work in the U.S., but her mother and brother came back to the village. Margit

shared with me so many stories about America. For me, it sounded like a dreamland. With her Shirley Temple hairstyle and beautiful dresses, she looked magnificent. For me, it became a dream. When I will grow up, I thought, I wanted to go to America. I told Margit so often that we would go there together.

My life in the village was so pleasant and peaceful. At age 6, I started first grade at the village's Presbyterian school. The one-room schoolhouse was filled with children from first to sixth grade. One teacher was responsible for all the classes and the Presbyterian minister, András Raski, for the religious education.

I liked going to school. I was ready to learn and wanted to show my parents that I was a good student. I remember in third grade, the teacher, a tall, heavyset man, Barath Balint, was standing before the map of Hungary and asking questions. Two classes were standing together. He had a ruler in his hand. I answered one of his questions and was so proud I got it right. But suddenly, the teacher became very angry. He took off his belt and started hitting me. I was shocked. I did not understand why he was doing this.

When I arrived home and told my parents what happened my mother was very sad. She told me that from now on, even if I knew the correct answer, I had to be careful not to answer because I am Jewish. The teacher became angry because I knew the answer and it was the first time, at age 8 1/2, that I met with anti-Semitism. I trembled and cried all evening. The belt hurt my shoulders. I could not lay on my back. But worst of all was that I did not understand why I got hit, being such a hard working student.

In spite of all the hardship at school, I continued to study. We were 5 Jewish students in the whole school. The teacher continued

his anti-Semitic remarks and we knew that he did not like us. It was hard before my classmates. I felt humiliated and wondered what made him so angry and why he disliked us. I was trying so hard to keep my friends. I was so young and happy with the life in the village.

Our neighbors and my gentile friends would come to my house often. Revaranyos was my home-- the tree-lined streets, the little houses, the river Tisza, our beautiful flower garden, the berry bushes, the combine machine noise which cut the wheat in the summertime. This was my village and part of my life.

In the early 1930's my grandfather, who was a kind, tall man, was still working in the store. And my grandmother, who was a very sweet lady, she and my grandfather were very proud and good Hungarian citizens. Very often, I heard that my grandfather, David Klein, gave money to build the village Presbyterian church. So his name was in the church cupola. I was proud to be Jacob Klein's daughter. My great-grandfather, Ferenc Klein, was a virilist, which is Hungarian for one of the highest taxpayers, of the borough of Szabolcs. My great-grandfather was born in Revaranyos.

My family was well respected in the borough of Szabolcs. I remember when the highest bishop of the Presbyterian church came to our village. My brother, Ernő, came home from the yeshiva to build an honor gate to welcome him. He and the rabbi of Vásaronsnameney, Moshe Shimen, stood by the gate, which was decorated with beautiful flowers. From all the neighboring villages, the Jewish people came to welcome Bishop Dezső Baltazár, who came from Debrecen. The bishop arrived by limosine. The rabbi and my brother went forward and greeted him in Hebrew, "Baruch cha ba", which means blessed who comes. Baltazár answered, "Shalom alechem", which means peace be with you.

Baltazár was a great scholar, During the late 1930's, he gave his support to the Jewish people and spoke up against the Nazis. He wanted to help the Jews, but unfortunately, he was sick and died of a heart attack. Very few people dared to talk or help the Jews.

But in our village, the Presbyterian minister, András Raskil, always remained and gave his support to the Jews in the village. He was good to my parents, up till the last hours before the deportations. And I gratefully acknowledge the family of Saniszlós' children, whose mother visited my parents in the ghetto several times. She was turned away by the gendarme, but she believed so much in doing the right thing, even in those cruel times.

We were very friendly with our neighbors. I remember quite often going out with my friends to the fields and helping to pick grapes in the vineyards. In autumn, we cooked jam (szüretelni lekuar) from the plums. Our neighbors would come over and help us.

My father taught Jewish studies to children. Our house was a happy one, always full of children. In those years, I never felt that someday our life would be in danger.

Hungary is located in central Europe. After World War I, which Hungary lost, under the terms of the Trianon Treaty, Hungary lost territory to Czechoslovakia in the north, Romania on the east, yugoslavia in the south and Austria in the west. Admiral Miklos Horthy entered Budapest, with his National Army, and became the leader of Hungary in 1920. The Patriotic Jewish leaders at that time declared their devotion and strong support to Horthy. But in the early 1920's, antisemitic propaganda started.

The Law of the Numerus Clausus limited the number of Jewish students who could attend university. The anti-Semitic Gyula Gömbös

started propaganda against the Jews. The Jewish people of Hungary became the victims of the country. All the hardships were blamed on the Jews. As a minority group in the population, they became the scapegoats. In 1933, the Arrow Cross Party was formed with Ferenc Salasi as their leader.

The official leaders were antisemites. Gyula Gömbös became prime minister from 1932 to 1936. In 1937, Kalman Darany followed. In 1938 he was succeeded by Bela Imredy.

I remember as a young child how my mother read the newspaper and her face looked so worried. She tried to hide from us the cruel, barbaric headlines of the antisemites, who lost their humanity in their evil rage. We were so young. In her noble character, with her deep love for us, she never complained. She wanted us to be happy.

In September 1938, a large group of soldiers came to the village. They called themselves the Free Army of the Arrow Cross (Szabab csapat). The northern part of Hungary, Felvidék, Czechoslovakia, which belonged to Hungary before the Trianon Treaty, was the main request of Hungary in 1938, while negotiations continued for the return of the territory. The Arrow Cross Party wanted to use force to occupy that territory, to gain more power and show their patriotism. But this went without success. While their leader, Ferenc Szalasi, was under arrest for his illegal activities against the government of Teleky, the large group of the Free Army settled in the villages and little towns on the Czechoslovakian border of Hungary. They passed out antisemitic leaflets and trained large groups of boys, ages 16-20 for military maneuvers. In our village came a group of 200 men.

We had to empty out one room in our house. They stayed in the village for 3 months. They did military exercises. Their anti-Jewish slogans were welcomed by some of the villagers. They robbed

our store. They took a large barrel of petroleum and made a hole in it. In the backyard, they poured out large bottles of vinegar. They took materials for dresses. They broke the shelves in the store. They destroyed everything.

One night, they came to our house and took my father and brother away to the school building. They took every Jewish man from the village. These soldiers cut off their beards and sidelocks, beat up every man and kept them through the night. My mother, along with the other Jewish women, went for help.

Five miles from our village lived a noble Hungarian aristocrat, Miklos Jármy. He had a large farm with 500 acres of land. He lived with his wife, the baroness, and one son. Everybody admired his beautiful horses. He was a high ranking officer in the Hungarian army. He was well known in high places. He was a kind and generous person. Every year, after the harvest, he gave his workers a bonus. I remember as a child how with my friends we admired his beautiful horse-drawn carriage, when he passed through the village.

My mother felt very ashamed, going so late at night to disturb him. It was midnight. But when he heard what had happened, he drove to the village, went to the school building and gave the order to let the Jewish men go home. The soldiers obeyed him. But the Jewish people were scared to go home. They knew that after Jármy would leave, the soldiers would start other pogroms.

My father and brother went into hiding at my girlfriend Margit's house. We waited at home. We were scared over what would happen late at night. We knew my father and brother would stay in hiding. For three months, my father hid in a barn. My brother left the village. One night in December, 1938 the soldiers returned and destroyed

Jewish houses. The wooden floor of our house was ruined. Furniture and dishes were broken. But worst of all, the Jewish people were left in shock. I saw on my parents faces, the fear and sadness. At night, my parents could not sleep. My mother had nightmares. Whenever she heard dogs barking, she was scared the soldiers were coming back. In such a short time, our lives changed. Our friendships with our neighbors remained, but so did the scars.

The newspapers wrote articles against the Jews. The first anti-Jewish laws were out. I remember the big scandal of Béla Imrédy, the prime minister. He had to resign from his post because he had Jewish ancestors.

The daily paper wrote, "Imrédy lemondot. Gróf Teleky Pál jön, zsidó öseire hivatkozua, távozott a bársony székből a minister elnökur." Imrédy resigns. Pál Teleky is coming. He had to give back his velvet chair because of his Jewish ancestors.

Our daily life continued, but there was constant fear. When the Shabbat day arrived, which always used to be peaceful, the people after prayer would start talking about the Jewish people in Germany--about the harrassment and anti-Jewish laws. The Anschluss of Austria, which bordered Hungary, brought the Third Reich closer. At the end of their discussion, the men always agreed that in Hungary, nothing could happen to the Jewish people. My father would say, "My father and my grandfather and further generations back were born in Hungary and were good citizens. They were good taxpayers of the Borough of Szabolcs. The Hungarian government will never turn against the Jewish people." People would say that Hitler was a maniac, but the noble Miklos Horthy, the Regent of Hungary, would not let anyone hurt any of his people.

My brother became a soldier in the Hungarian army. He came home wearing the army uniform and was so proud. He would sing army songs.

My father looked at him with such pride. He told us, "You see, your brother, he is a good Hungarian soldier. Hungary will never follow Nazi Germany."

I, as a young girl, believed what my father said. I was happy being in school and with my friends. One young student, especially, used to come to my house. He was in the 5th year at the Gymnasium. He paid so much attention to me. I was popular and felt proud that I had so many friends among the village teenagers. I was invited to my friends houses and with my mother's help, I used to bake cakes and invite them to my house.

My father's older brother, uncle Menyus, lived in America. He sent affidavits to the whole family. We registered with the Consulate and were happy that we would have a good future. We started to learn English from books. I had the opportunity to speak English with my best friend, Margit. She was fluent in the language. My parents made arrangements with the Cunard White Star, the English shipping company. Unfortunately, our number never did not come within the quota.

In 1939 came the second anti-Jewish law. Our life in the village became hard. My father, who was well-educated in Hebrew, continued to teach children after public school and he gave Bar Mitzvah lessons. My sister Margit, who was a dressmaker, worked hard to help the family. Our little store did not make enough money to support our large family.

In 1941, my father and brother were called in for the working army groups. My brother felt humiliated. For two years, he served in the Royal Hungarian Army, participated in the occupation of Transylvania, and now the anti-Jewish laws forbid him from being in the army. All Jewish men were taken to forced labor camps.

The anti-Jewish laws forbid Jewish people from buying wheat. Two of my sisters went to work for friendly neighbors in the fields. We needed tickets to buy wood for the winter. One day the news came

that if one member of the family was in the army, the village mayor's office would give them a ticket.

As a young girl, I wanted to help my parents. I went to the village mayor's office. There were long lines of people waiting. When my turn came, I was hurried in, assured that I would get tickets. My father knew the mayor a long time. When I told him I came for the tickets as we needed wood for the winter, I reminded him that my father and brother were in the army. He turned towards me with anger and said, "Your father and brother are not in the army. They are Jewish. So your family doesn't get tickets."

I felt like I was choking. The tears swelled in my eyes. I could not control the crying. I just stood there. These words hurt me so much. I was Jacob Klein's daughter, the virilist, David Klein's granddaughter. I felt humiliated that nobody came to me in the mayor's office to say a nice word. I became very sad that people changed so much.

Many people in the village still, though, were supportive. My friends understood me and I had hope that everything would go back to the old ways. I was very busy at school and after school I studied English with my sisters.

My deep love for the village life continued. I sat for hours in my garden, embroidering, reading or watching the birds. In the chimney we had a stork. We had a swallow's nest on the veranda. I loved to watch the birds migrate in September to warm climates and return in the spring. I always wondered how they could find their nests. Even to birds and animals, a home is a home.

Nature gave me so much pleasure. The large apple groves, the vineyard, the large field with melons, every season was beautiful. The first snow, which came in November, laid in the ground the whole

winter. We had the greatest fun riding the horse-driven sled. We used to walk in the deep snow to visit our friends in the neighboring villages of Gyüre and Koposcapáti. In springtime, we walked down to the river Tisza. We watched how the melted snow traveled down the river. This G-d given beauty, the serenity, nobody could take away from us.

My sister Rozsi, who spent two years at the Hebrew Gymnasium of Munkacz, where she studied English, art and sewing, came home the summer of 1942. By now, village life was very hard. The younger Jewish men were away in the forced labor camps. Many Jewish families were starving. From the Gmzsa, a Jewish relief agency, we received very little help. From my brother, we did not get any mail. We did not know what happened to him at the forced labor camps.

The 11 Jewish families of the village were desperate. Our neighbors were friendly with us, but there was no future for young girls. Our little store did not have enough merchandise. My father continued providing groceries to the village people, as always, selling on credit. When they had money they would pay their bills.

My sister Rozsi and I went to Budapest. She went to work. I wished to study. It was hard living in the big city after the serenity of the village. The trolley's noise, the cars, the horse-drawn carriages with ice. The handler, who came everyday to buy used clothing. The large group of people on the street rushing to work. In the village, I knew everybody. I was missing my friends. In the beginning, I did not know how to make friends in the large city of Budapest.

After a short time, I joined the Zionist group of Bnei Akiva. We had a large group of boys and girls. Many young people came to the city from the little towns and villages. I was observing the

Shabbat and the Jewish Holydays. After a short time, I continued my religious education.

My Hebrew teacher, Esztike Finkelstein, came from Szered in Slovakia. She told us what happened to her parents. After the German occupation, the SS took the Jewish people from the towns and villages and led them away by foot. Without food, the SS forced them to walk long miles. She told us that many people were taken to Kattowitz in Poland. People, young and old, men, women and children, were starving and forced to walk barefoot. A large number of people were dying at the cruel hands of the SS soldiers.

She and her friend crossed the border of Hungary at night, and since, were hiding in Budapest to save their lives. But they lived in fear and worried about their families. When I heard what was happening, I wanted to help her so much. Her eyes expressed so much sadness and fear, but her love of religion was so strong. The way she taught us, in deep devotion, her belief in G-d and her love of people, even during those hard times being the teacher whose only concern was her students. I am very grateful to her as she always gave us hope that the day would come when we would be free to study and would be able to proudly declare our practice of the Jewish religion.

Work and study continued for me in Budapest. In 1943, for Rosh HaShona, the Jewish New Year, I decided to go home. I wanted to see my parents. I arrived home two days before the holiday. I still remember my sister, Ilonka, standing in front of our store. She came towards me with outstretched arms.

My father had a visitor, the rabbi from Vāsáronsnamémy, Moshe Shimen. My father introduced me in Yiddish. My father was so proud of his family. My mother was baking a cake with cocoa, which I smelled from far away. I remember her warm smile. She was so happy that the family would be together for the holidays. Every room in the house was so clesn.

My sister, Erzsika, was scrubbing the wooden floor of the synagogue. Margit, my older sister, was ironing. Guests also came for the holidays. My mother's sister, aunt Malika, was coming with uncle Jacob. My aunt had heart trouble. She came because we had a synagogue in our house and she could listen to the prayers. My aunt Erzsike came too, with her 3 little sons. It was a tradition in our family that for holidays we always had guests. There was a proud smile on my father's face, as he stood in front of the holiday table, set with the best dishes and silver candlesticks. And with his lovely voice, he said the kiddish.

Just like before a storm, the uncertainty of the times was felt by everybody. My friends in the village were very upset about the war. The young boys were worried about the army, the Jewish boys about the forced labor. Our meeting together was pleasant. My best friend, Margit, was glad to see me. We had so many things to tell each other. In our young life, we shared so many things. I told her what was happening to the Jewish people in Czechoslovakia, my fear of persecution, how worried I was about my parents as I knew I would have to return to Budapest. She told me that one other aunt, Irénke Pongoratz, joined the Socialist Arrow Cross Party (Nyilas) and she had meetings once a week in her house. I knew her aunt well. I used to babysit for her daughter, Sidonia. I Always shared my dessert with the little girl. I did not receive money from her. I always did this because she was my best friend's cousin. I loved her very dearly. We were neighbors.

I asked my mother about the meetings. She told me that all the village people who participate in fascist meetings were friendly and would never hurt us. My poor mother, she never believed that people could change and become followers of the cruel Arrow Cross party. When I saw the long lines of marching women, down the village's main street

on Sunday afternoon, singing about the nyilas' leader, Ferenc Szálasí, I knew that my parents did not want to believe that those young girls who grew up with my sisters and whose parents sat with us on our veranda on Sunday afternoon could ever hate us. Among them were Irénke Pongoratz, Emma Dobbos, for whom my older sister Margit sewed beautiful summer dresses, and many others, who were so closely associated with my family. I had hope that with time, they would change and we would become friendly again, because we knew each other, grew up together and went to the same school.

My vacation time went so fast and after 3 weeks, when the holidays had ended, I was packing to go back to Budapest. But I was scared to leave my parents. I remembered what my Hebrew teacher told me about the suffering of the Jewish people in Czechoslovakia at the hands of the Nazi soldiers. I had to tell my parents.

My father said that all of our ancestors were born in Hungary, for many generations. They were hard working, respected people. Nobody would hurt us. We were good Hungarian citizens. Our Regent Admiral, Miklós Horthy, would never hurt or let anyone else hurt his people. He also said that what I heard in Budapest could not be true. Nobody would hurt innocent people with such cruelty.

It was September, 1943. My mother was worried about my brother, who was in the forced labor camps. We did not hear from him. His fiancée, Racuka, spent the holidays of Succot with us. I will always remember the 3 weeks I spent with my family, the last time I went to say goodbye to my friends. My mother asked me to stay home. But I knew that there was no future in the village for me. I did promise I would come home in the spring for Passover. I left my parents. I left my home. When the time came to say goodbye, I saw my mother's tears. My father stood without words.

I wondered if they really felt something terrible would happen, which would separate us forever. My mother asked me not to go away from home. My village of Revaranyos was 365 kilometers from Budapest. So I thought that after a train ride of a few hours, I could be home again. I could not believe it at this time. No human mind could imagine that such a terrible genocide would happen, that children would be separated from parents and we never would see each other again.

When I went back to Budapest, I carried so many packages with me. My sister, Margit, made me some new dresses. I was the youngest child in my family. Back in Budapest, during the winter of 1943, I participated in many activities in the Zionist youth group.

I remember that during Chanukah, we, the girls of Bnei Akiva, participated in a play at the Jewish Gymnasium. The title of the play was "The Suffering of the Jewish People". I recited a poem:

Most még tél van, a fény nemvilagit,

Hideg orkánvágja ablakod.

Nyusd hát kezed kis testvérkém a télbe

És álmellém hittél senkitől sem félve.

Migvihar zug kint, és filvirad a reggel

Csoportosulj testvér ahiveiddel.

Hogy kine hüljön parazsló hited.

Alj mellém testvérkém, álmellématélbe

Mert kint hideg van, hidegvan hideg. Translated into English,

Give your hand to me, my sister, in this winter.

Stand close by me and do not be afraid

While a storm is out there, before the sunrise,

We all stand together and we believe in faith.

Do not lose your faith, do not forget to pray.

And stand be me, my sisters, my brothers, in the storm,
Because outside is cold, very cold.

I remember when we sang, people were wiping their eyes. We finished the play with the lighting of the chanukia, remembering the brave Maccabees. The beautiful light of the Chanukah candles, the warm glow would overcome the darkness and our faith would give us strength to overcome the hardship. I remember how we held each other. We got our strength from friendship and love in a time when we were so close to danger and cruelty.

The month of March came. I was looking forward to going home for Passover. On the 19th of March, the German SS Forces occupied Budapest. It was 10:00 AM. We turned on the radio. There was no morning news, no music. We heard Hitler's voice and every moment we heard, "Sieg heil", long live Hitler, from a large crowd. Then the patriotic German army song came on. The newsman said, "Deutschland über alles", Germany above everything.

My aunt said that something happened, because on every station we heard German. Around 11:00 AM, Lébu, my cousin's best friend, came over. He said that German forces occupied Budapest. He saw the Nazi flag with the swastika over the Parliament. There was a short announcement over the radio. The German forces came to Budapest for security reasons. We knew that Hungary was Germany's ally since the late 1930's. Hungary helped Germany with food and army supplies. Germany helped Hungary regain the territories which were lost during the Trianon Treaty of 1918.

The Hungarian Arrow Cross followed the murderous Nazi propaganda in 1938 already. But nobody ever believed that in March of 1944, Germany would invade Hungary. We, the Jewish people, foresaw the great danger. My first thought was my family, who lived on the Czechoslovakian border, 365 kilometers from Budapest. What would happen? I wanted to go home to

my peaceful native village, where my family roots went back for centuries.

Our house, with the embroidered curtains in the windows. The vineyard in our backyard, the rose garden, the two vegetable gardens. Our large garden with the fruit trees. The chicken coop, with the geese and ducks. I remembered every little detail about my childhood in the village. I was the youngest in my family. I felt isolated and very far away.

My sister Rózsi lived at Kiraly Street 23, just a few blocks away from me. I went to see her. The German tanks, with their swastikas, were all over. I saw many German SS soldiers in Andrási Street. They looked very sharp, with their polished boots and clean uniforms. When I reached my sister's house, I was shivering from fear. My heart was beating so fast. I knew that we, the Jewish people, were in great danger. I met on Dobutca and Kazinczyut and Shiputca many Jewish people. Their faces showed the fear and misery, without words. We were like hunted prey.

Rózsi comforted me. My sister had a strong belief in humanity. She believed that as long as you work, nobody will hurt you. How could this fine, young woman, with her caring and kind personality, imagine the extreme cruelty, the inhumane treatment, the methods the Nazis used against the Jewish people.

We decided to go home for Passover, with the hope that our family would be together. Shortly after the occupation, new anti-Jewish laws came. People, from young to old, had to wear the yellow star on the left side of their chest. I still remember the first time I wore the yellow star on my coat. I went out on the street. I felt so humiliated, like I was a marked person. I was thinking that everybody was looking at me. I knew from my experience in the village that to be a Jew was very hard, because the teacher, Baráth Balint, humiliated us so often. But to wear the yellow star was the worst.

The young SS soldiers walked along the street as if they owned the whole city. When they saw a Jew, they would laugh. When I met a Hungarian nyilas, he cursed and said, "Nem Sokára végetek lesz, minden zsidót elpusztítunk." (Soon your end will come. We will finish you.)

At my aunt's house, we always had friends over. They all talked about the danger in the street. I witnessed a razzia (round-up) in Rakocy Street. One morning, the SS surrounded people wearing the yellow star. Men, women and young children, in large groups, were taken away by foot to the railroad station of Kelety, where freight trains waited for them. Large groups of people were forced to go on the freight cars. Then bolted from the outside, the trains carried their innocent prey and deported the victims to concentration camps. At every railroad station in Budapest, the freight trains were ready and waiting.

After the razzia, I went to my sister's house to check up on her and see if she was alright. I felt my hand hurting me. When I saw the SS hitting and cursing the Jews, my fingernails were cutting into my hand. I was helpless. I felt the pain of my fellow human beings. Their pain was mine too.

I remember how they walked toward the railroad station, the Kelety pályaudvar. I did not wear the yellow star on my coat. I walked to the Kelety railroad station to see what was happening.

In April, new anti-Jewish laws had come out. Jewish people were restricted in going to public places. They were not allowed to communicate with their gentile neighbors. They had to turn in their radios. A week before Passover, I went to the Kelety pályaudvar with my sister Rózsi. We wore the yellow star because on every street there were signs that said that Jews must wear the yellow star and they would be severely punished if their star was not sewn on.

At the railroad station were many SS soldiers. We saw them taking

off the Jews from the passenger trains, hitting them and forcing them onto the freight cars, which were standing close by. There were many Hungarian police. And the gendarme announced loudly that Jewish people could not leave Budapest. My sister and I covered the yellow star with our handbags and went out to the street, away from the danger. We could not talk, we were terrified.

We looked at each other. It was the first time that I saw Rózsi show fear in her eyes. What would happen? How would we see our parents? We saw the SS cruelty. We felt alone and isolated. We hugged each other.

Rózsi, who was nine years older than me, said, "Now the two of us will stay together and will take care of each other."

Passover came. It was the first time I was not with my parents for the seder. I remember how my father used to conduct the seder, wearing a white kittle, seated on a pillow in his chair. He read the Haggadah, the story of the slavery and hardship in Egypt, and how G-d saved us from the hand of the Tormentor, the miracle of the crossing of the Red Sea and the punishment for Egypt.

In the spring of 1944, the Nazis and the Hungarian gendarme forgot G-d's laws, which taught every human being how to love his fellow man. They tortured and humiliated men, women and even little babies suffered in their barbaric hands. My sister Rózsi and I were so far away from our home in the little village of Revaranyos.

In Budapest, life became very hard. There were food shortages. Bread could only be bought for tickets. Oil, eggs and butter became very expensive. I was always hungry. We just fought to survive.

I ate kosher food once a day. I went to Hanna at Nagyatádi Street 32, a Menza, soup kitchen, run by the Agudat Yisrael women's organization. My sister cooked for herself, but she had very little

food. She lost so much weight. I was very scared. I lost my monthly menstrual cycle. I did not know what happened to me.

It was May, 1944. No news came from our parents. Our heartache was terrible. We cried so much. We were helpless. I could not attend classes. I did some sewing, so I got a little money. I always spent my free time with Rózsi. She had a job and always helped me out with a little money. I will forever remember her kind, loving words to me. I felt blessed, having such a wonderful sister, and I had hope that we would stay together and survive those hard times.

The daily newspaper wrote long articles, praising the leader of the Nyilas party, Ferenc Szálasi. The anti-Semite blamed the Jews for Hungary's troubles. They wanted all the people to know that the Jewish problem was the biggest problem of Hungary and needed a solution.

A little article appeared in the newspaper that May. "Jewish people from the villages and small towns had been moved away for security reasons." We wrote to our neighbors in the village, but no answer came. During the month, our neighbor's son came to Budapest. He visited us. My parents sent with him some material for dresses. He told us that our patents were taken away to a little town near us, Kisvárdá, where there was a ghetto for the Jews to live in. He told me he would let us know what was happening.

We asked him to help our sisters get away. He said he couldn't because the gendarme kept a count of every Jew.

In Budapest our life became more and more difficult. I worked at a tailor shop, but the money was not enough to buy food. My cousin Ibi worked there. We went together. One day after work, there was an air raid. We wore our yellow stars. Everybody on the streets was running to shelters. We were not let into a shelter because we were Jewish. The suffering and the hunger were terrible

I was just 17 years old, always hungry. My tooth hurt. I lost so much weight. Every evening I went to the kosher kitchen, but the only food they had were dried peas and a little bread, with soup. My aunt Pepi was very kind to me. She gave me a little food. She shared the little that she had. Fear of the unknown, the thought of what would happen to us and the constant hunger were very difficult. Also we worried what was happening to our parents.

In the kosher kitchen, there was a large group of girls. They all came from little towns and villages. Some came from Czechoslovakia. They all were very young, from 13 years old to 22. They knew about the German cruelty, because in 1939, after the occupation, they went through a very hard time. They knew about the ghettos and deportations in 1943 to Poland. They came to Budapest, where they would survive by hiding from the persecution. They thought that the Nazi barbarism would never reach them in Budapest.

When the Germans occupied Hungary, the Jewish population was over 800,000. The German machinery reached all the countries in central and eastern Europe. They wanted to make Europe "Juden Frei", free of Jews. While they worked on their barbaric method for the solution of the Hungarian Jewish problem, we, the young, innocent victims, supported each other. Every Shabbat afternoon, our large Bnei Akiva group met in Klavzál Tér. We had lectures, learned news about Palestine and had a bible study group.

When we were together, we forgot the dangers, the razzia, when the SS took away Jews from the street. Together with our friends, we felt hope, friendship and warmth. We were a group. We supported each other. We talked about our family. We did not give up hope. We prayed for the day when we would be free again, when life would return to normality. We sang songs together, made plans for the future. We lived in hope that

our brothers and sisters and parents would survive the hardship. For a short time, we did not think about the cruel outside world, which was closing in on us. In our mind it was the will to survive.

We would talk about food. We did not have enough money to pay the high price to buy bread. We needed tickets. We shared our food with each other, but we had very little.

During May, 1944, I heard that the Jewish people of the villages and small towns were removed from the ghetto. No newspaper wrote about it. We did not hear about it on the radio. The news came from people who were traveling to the county. When we heard it, we could not believe it. We heard that our parents and sisters were in the ghetto of Kisvarda. We heard what hardships they endured, not enough food, overcrowding. We heard that so many people got sick in the ghetto. But the news of deportation left us totally numb. Where did the Nazis take them? What Happened? How could Hungary allow the Nazis to take the Hungarian Jews away? Who gave the order for deportation? Miklós Horthy, the noble admiral, the president of Hungary, would not let this happen.

My sister and I remembered what our father used to say: "Our ancestors lived in Hungary for centuries. We are safe here. The Hungarian authorities will never let any harm come upon the Hungarian Jews. We are good, productive citizens of Hungary."

I hurried to the Jewish Agency for information. I wanted to know what was happening. My heart was beating so fast. I was afraid what they would say. They could not give me information. They said there was no official report.

In the end of June, I went again and they showed me a postcard from Waldsee. The Jewish Agency told me that many Jews were taken from the ghetto to Waldsee to work. They said that there was no reason to

worry. No details were given. I was worried.

Rózsi and I met everyday. When I went to visit her, I always took off the yellow star. I walked on the side streets, but there were so many German SS out. It was dangerous for a Jew to be on the streets of Budapest.

At the end of June, an article appeared in the newspaper about the Jewish population. From the northeast of Hungary, the Jewish people were taken away for security reasons. But not one word was mentioned that they had been deported out of the country.

Life in Budapest was so very hard. I worked in a factory. The tailor shop had closed. The factory paid very little, but I liked it because people were good to me and I was treated well. I wore the yellow star. Rózsi was working at the army factory. She received bread tickets. The food supply at the kosher kitchen dwindled.

Units from the forced labor camp stationed in Budapest came by in large numbers. They were very hungry. The little amount of food had to be shared with them. So many men were sick. They told us about the cruel treatment they received from the Hungarian Arrow Cross, the gendarme and the horred SS. Many of the men went into hiding.

New anti-Jewish laws came out. Jews were forbidden to be on the street in the evening hours. Houses where Jewish people lived had to display a large yellow star on the main entrance of the building.

Where I lived, Dohány St. 56, became a Jewish house. We were isolated from our gentile neighbors. With every week came new restrictions. Jewish people were forbidden to leave their apartments for more than two hours a day.

It was a very hot summer in 1944. When I went out to buy some food in the market of Klauzal Tér, I remember the older Jewish men and women running on the street and looking back every minute, as if they were being hunted. Panic and fear showed on every Jewish face. When

we saw an SS soldier or a Hungarian Arrow Cross, with their arrogant look, we sensed danger and with the yellow star, we were humiliated and suffered the most terrible feeling.

When I was growing up, my father so often talked about respect to older people, understanding and love to our fellow human beings. In the year 1944, we were lowered, we felt like we were hunted by our fellow man, who forgot about G-d's teachings, about civilization.

There will always be a dark spot in the history of mankind, in the twentieth century. The shameful truth, that in all the streets of Budapest, there seemed to be nobody who the Jews could turn to for help. There were so many occupied countries in central and eastern Europe where the fascist hate mongers spewed their poison.

I felt as if the world lost its humanity. I was standing one day with my friend in the backyard at Nagyatádi Sabo St. 32. We heard a laugh. Then we saw young SS soldiers throwing stones at us. For them, it was entertainment to see us hurt and running away. Day after day, we lived in fear. My sister continued to work at the army factory. It gave her security and hope that she would stay in Budapest. She always worried about me. She gave me money so I could buy some food. We were waiting for the war to be over soon and hoped we would hear about our family- our parents and sisters, Margit, Ilonka, Erzsike (Neché). They were so young. We hoped we would see them soon.

My brother Ernő was away in the army labor force. The young Jewish men were taken away from the towns and villages in 1941 to forced labor camps. They were taken to the Ukraine with the Hungarian army battalions. We heard rumors that large numbers of Jewish people were dying from malnutrition and cruel treatment. We also heard that large groups of Jews were taken from Budapest to Kistarcsa brick factory and then loaded onto freight trains and transported to an unknown place.

It was very hard for us to believe that 85 persons were forced into a boxcar, a cattle car, without food, children as well as old. We were scared.

My aunt said that we must go into hiding. We knew that if we wanted to survive, we must hide. Every Jewish life in Budapest was in great danger. We hoped that the war would end soon. We heard that the Russians were fighting in the Carpathian mountains on the Czechoslovakian border of Hungary. There were frequent air raids in Budapest. The allied forces successfully fought the German army on every front.

With my aunt Pepi and cousin Ibolyka, we went to hide in an iron manufacturing plant. The factory was closed. An older couple was on guard. They let us hide in the factory shelter. We were to stay there until the end of the war. After a few days, a young couple also came there. In the underground shelter, it was dark and cold. The time seemed endless. The fear of discovery by the Gestapo made us shiver. The only time we had contact with the outside world was when they brought down food to us.

After a few days, we heard that somebody had reported to the SS that people were hiding in the plant. We had to leave late at night, but we were afraid to go home because the SS were searching every building where Jewish people lived. We were standing late at night on the quiet Nazi street and wondering what to do next, where we should go.

My cousin Laci decided that we could hide in a high school on a Hungarian boulevard. Nobody was there in summertime and we would be safe. We settled our few belongings on the hard floor of the high school bathroom and lay down to sleep. We were very tired, but nobody could fall asleep. We were afraid that somebody would find us. After a few

hours, we went back to our apartment. We became prey again for the hunters.

On the streets of Budapest, there were large numbers of gendarme and SS, openly attacking and arresting Jews. Hundreds of men and women were taken to the Gestapo headquarters on Andrásy St., where they were tortured. Many were killed on the streets after being arrested.

I remember one early morning in the end of July, two SS soldiers and a Hungarian policeman came to our apartment. They looked for radios. Every Jewish family who had a radio and did not bring it to the Hungarian authorities was severely punished. My cousin Laci had a radio which he kept in the closet. After the SS searched every corner of the apartment rooms, they reached the closet. Luckily my aunt's wet laundry was in a large basket there. When their hands reached the wet laundry, they cursed and left. We were lucky to live in a small place where the furniture looked so old and cheap. When the SS saw a house furnished with expensive items, they arrested the people and searched for jewelry and other luxury items.

I was sleeping when they came in. Their loud, rough voices woke me up. I was scared that they would come and take us away. During their search, I fainted in the bed. I will never forget their loud voices. After they left, my aunt spoke to me with care and understanding. My aunt Pepi lived with her children. She had had a very hard life. My uncle passed away when he was in his early fifties. My aunt had to work to support her family for many years.

When her children were grown up, they remembered her hard life. After the war, she went to the United States and lived with her daughter Ibi. My aunt passed away when she reached 98 years. During the years in Budapest and here, in the Bronx, I was very fond of her. She was the person to whom I would turn when I needed advice. Her strong

religious beliefs, her noble character, her good nature in helping others were several of many fine qualities that my aunt possessed.

During the wartime, she shared with me her little food. I will never forget her kindness to me during this time. Her strong belief in G-d taught me how to live and overcome hardship. She was my teacher after liberation. She was my friend, to whom I could turn to during difficult times. My sister, Neche, and I were always grateful when she gave us advice. I remember how I called her every Friday afternoon to wish her a good Shabbat. I visited her often.

In August, 1944, the situation grew worse for the Jews in Budapest. We could go out for only 2 hours a day. We had to wear the yellow star and in the stores we had to wait. There was a food shortage. I had very little money. The kosher kitchen became a shelter for many young men from the forced labor camps. They were brought to Budapest with Hungarian army units. When the army retreated, they were hungry and sick from the hard life in the Ukraine over the years. Though many went into hiding as they knew the Arrow Cross would arrest them.

Every evening I took off the yellow star from my shirt and went to the kosher kitchen. Food was served there once a day and consisted of soup from dried peas or beans with a little bread. I was always hungry.

I visited my sister regularly. Her building, Kiralyutca 23, became a Jewish house, with a large yellow star in the front. I was worried about her. She worked very hard at the army factory. Her wages were very low. She could hardly support herself. So often, I asked her to stop working in the army factory, but she believed she was safe if she worked. Our goal was that we had to survive. She was always worried when she saw me without the yellow star.

During the summer months, I went to parks and stores without the yellow star. I was out on the street because I felt I had the right to walk, the right to be free, and nobody could take my freedom away from me. Luckily, the SS and the Hungarian police never arrested me.

In late July, we heard that the Swedish consulate would give out schuttpasses (passports) to the Jewish people of Budapest. Our hope rose. There were some righteous people who stayed humane during the Holocaust and helped the Jews. At this time, a noble Swedish gentleman, Raoul Wallenberg, came to Budapest. He used all of his diplomatic efforts and did not care about his personal safety. His life was in danger. He worked very hard, giving out passports. He personally interfered with the Arrow Cross atrocities and saved a large number of Jews in Budapest.

During the first week of August, I went to the Swedish consulate but the lines were very long. Everybody wearing a yellow star was there. I waited but my turn never came. After two hours, we had to leave. No Jews could be on the streets. The police with loud speakers asked everyone to leave. I could not go home. I was standing in line for two hours, in the heat. How could I go home empty handed. I went to the backyard of the building, took off the yellow star and walked in. To my surprise, nobody stopped me in the doorway. I felt that my sister must get a passport. She was too scared to go into hiding.

The secretary asked for my name and birth date. I gave her my sister's name. She told me to come back the next day and it would be ready. When I went back the following day, I went early, without wearing the yellow star. A guard at the doorway stopped me. He said that nobody could just walk in. I assured him that a day before, I gave all the information and my passport was to be ready. I told him I would not go away without the passport because I was worried about

my sister. I opened the door and saw an extremely handsome young man, who looked very tired. He was sitting at a table. He talked to the guard. They let me in. I got the passport for my sister. I was happy my sister would be safe.

I realized years later, after the liberation, that the young man was the famous Swedish hero, Raoul Wallenberg. He personally met with the SS and Arrow Cross leaders and used all his diplomatic channels to save Jews in Budapest.

There were a few noble people who helped. As I mentioned, in my native village of Revaranyos, the Reverend András Raski, with his family, the Szanislo family and my good friend Margit supported and stood by my family and the other Jews of the village. It is a shame that the Hungarian government did not stop the cruel Arrow Cross and the barbaric SS Gestapo. The Hungarian gendarme rounded up the Jewish people for the ghettos and deportation. People who lived together for centuries did not stand up to them.

The Hungarian government, with Miklos Horthy in top leadership, became the puppet and slave of Nazi Germany. They lost their pride. The Jewish population of Hungary were devoted, truthful citizens of Hungary. MY father used to tell us stories about World War I, where so many Jewish soldiers lost their lives. Many became crippled for life. They fought with bravery and love for their country. But their native country sent them away to die in concentration camps, took their life savings, robbed their houses. And their children who survived the camps, they became homeless orphans.

We, the Jews of Budapest, were deeply hurt and humiliated at the hands of the Arrow Cross, their followers and the Gestapo. They made our life miserable and lowered us, like hunted animals. As a teenager, I always wondered how there could be so much cruelty. And deep in my heart, I always had hope that help would come and we would be saved.

But history showed that between 1939-1945, during World War II, millions of Jewish men, women and children were killed at Auschwitz and other concentration camps all over eastern Europe.

There was unbearable suffering from hunger and sickness in the ghettos and camps. We were slaughtered because we were Jews. The help came very late in Hungary, and was not enough.

The country's deportation started in May, 1944. Statistics show that the number of Jews killed from Hungary was 450,000, from Romania 300,000, Poland 3,000,000, White Russia 245,000, Russia 107,000, Germany/Austria 210,000, Ukraine 900,000, Yugoslavia 26,000, Bulgaria 14,000, Greece 54,000, Italy 8,000, France 90,000, Luxemburg 1,000, Belgium 40,000, the Netherlands 105,000, Slovakia 75,000, Protectorate 80,000, the Baltic countries 228,000, Norway 900. The number of Jews who were killed during the years of the Holocaust reached 6,000,000!

There were heroes whose good will to help the Jews, their bravery, in their noble way even the SS could not stop. They hid their fellow man, while they put their own life in danger. In every eastern European country, there were brave men and women who practiced the G-d given law, love thy neighbor as thyself. After liberation, I always remembered those kind people who helped me to survive.

Now, more than 50 years after World War II, when I hear about hatred, fighting and killing among nations, I wonder how and when people will learn that hatred destroys human life. Mankind can only survive if they obey the G-d given law, love thy neighbor. It is every parent's responsibility to teach their children to be loving, caring and G-d fearing, so when they grow up they will know how to respect their fellow man.

While Raoul Wallenberg continued to save the Jews of Budapest, my sister Rózsi and I met often. We felt the danger of being separated.

We worried about our family, what had happened to them, where they were, where they were taken. The High Holidays came. My aunt went for a short prayer service to the synagogue. I went to visit her. When I heard the familiar chanting of the prayers, I remembered my father, in our little synagogue in Revaranyos. He had a pleasant voice. I was wondering if I would ever hear his voice again.

Yom Kippur came, the holiday when we pray for forgiveness of our sins as well as prayers for the New Year. I remember in the synagogue how the prayers were said with so much emotion. We asked G-d to help us, to give us strength and life. We prayed for peace to come and for the time when our suffering would end and our life would be safe again. I remember when we said the Yizkor, the memorial prayer. I felt like choking. My tears could not come. I felt that my family was in danger, far, far away.

After the service, I took off the yellow star and hurried to my sister. I hugged her, without saying a word. Then my tears started to pour. I held her so close to me, and in my heart, I prayed that we would never be separated.

In mid September, I met many friends from Bnei Akiva. We still went to Nagyatadi Szabo St. 32. Everyone talked about the danger in the Jewish houses and on the streets, where there were constant razzias. They arrested the Jewish people and took them away to Kistarcsa brick factory and from there by freight trains they were taken away to concentration camps. Many of my friends talked about going into hiding. It was the only way to survive.

I spoke to my sister about it. She did not want to go. She thought that working at the army factory would save her. She had an identification card with her picture. She also had the schutzpass. In time of razzia, she would not be in danger.

We had air raids very often. There were rumors that the war would soon be over. Admiral Horthy wanted to make peace with the Allies. We heard that the Jewish population of Budapest would be saved. There would be an exchange with the SS, man for machinery. In the second week of October, 1944, the Hungarian Arrow Cross party took over the government leadership. Ferenc Szálasi became the prime minister. Since 1938, he was the leader of the rightist party.

On October 20, 1944, signs were posted that by order of the new government, every Jewish woman, between the ages of 16 and 45, had to go to the Kisok Palya Sports Stadium at 9 AM, October 23, 1944. From there, they would be taken to forced labor work in Hungary. Every person had to bring a knapsack, one blanket, an aluminum bowl and spoon set, towel and change of clothing, under 10 kilograms. Harsh punishment would be inflicted on those individuals who do not obey the order.

After I read the sign, I went to my sister's house to ask her what we should do. I was afraid that we would be separated. She still believed, as my parents did before, that if we would work hard, no harm would come to us. I was scared, because I saw how badly the Jewish people were being treated. I was so young. My concern was my sister. I wanted for us to be together.

In the morning of October 23, I went to the Kisok Palya Sports Stadium with my cousin Ibi. I went to look for my sister Rózsi. She was standing with a group of girls not far from us. We both lived in the seventh borough of Budapest. We had to stand 5 people in a line. When the SS and Arrow Cross soldiers came to check our identification, my sister showed them her papers, which proved that she was working at the army factory. They let her go. They separated us. We both started to cry. The SS took my group to march away. I wanted to kiss my sister. She could not come after me. We were now separated. She

stayed in Budapest. We marched away. It was raining. It was a cold, autumn day.

There were thousands of young women at the Kisok Stadium. There was one SS soldier with every group of young women, as well as a Hungarian Wermacht, a soldier from the Hungarian army. I felt very sad being separated from my sister, but I hoped that she would be safe in Budapest. I prayed that G-d would give me the strength to survive and we would be together again.

We marched for long hours. There were no stops. We could not ask questions. We did not know where they were taking us. To many women who could not walk fast, the cruel SS shouted, "Schnell, schnell du verfluchte Jude!" (Go quickly, you miserable Jew). From early morning, we were outdoors, in the cold and rain. We were hungry and very tired. Late in the afternoon, we arrived at Vecsés, the Ferihegy Airport. We were given soup and bread. We stayed in the army barracks. We slept 2 girls in one bunk.

The following morning, we were still very tired, but they woke us up at 6 AM. We got some black coffee and bread and we had to walk 2 kilometers from the airport to dig trenches. It was a cold day with icy rain. Our clothes were soaking wet. We had to work nonstop. At noontime, they gave us soup. I was always hungry. In the evening, I was so tired. Very often, I fell asleep with my wet clothes on. On some nights, the air raids woke us up.

In November, a large group of Jewish men were brought to the airport. They were digging trenches, not far from us. I saw a cruel SS beating the men. One man who was badly beaten jumped into an open well and drowned. The SS was cursing. He was angry because we used the well for drinking water.

Our food portion was very little. In the morning we had black coffee and a little piece of bread, at noon there was soup and in the evening they gave us cooked beans. We had to stand in line a long time for the food. I always forced myself to stand on line but sometimes I felt so weak and tired. The only thing on my mind was that I had to survive. I knew if I missed a meal I would not be able to wake up in the morning and go to work. I needed strength.

Everyday they took away the sick people from our group. We did not know what happened to them. When we marched through the village of Vecsés, some older village women gave us some bread. They held the bread in their apron pocket. But we had to be very careful that the SS would not see this as we were not allowed to communicate with the villagers. We were so afraid. The cruel SS beat up so many people.

We worked long hours in the rain and snow. Sometimes I felt sick and feverish. One night during an air raid, we heard the detonation of bombs. It was so close to us. The SS and the Hungarian soldiers went down to the shelters. We had to stay in the barracks. We were frightened that we would be killed. We ran out from the barracks. I think this saved our lives.

The planes were flying low on the other side of the airport. The Hungarian army barracks were hit. None of the Jewish men and women at the forced labor barracks got hurt. The next morning there were rumors the Russian army was advancing and very close to the front. I do not know who spread the news, but we had to be very careful because the SS guards understood Hungarian.

The order came the first week of December. We had to pack everything in our knapsacks. They were taking us away from the airport, but nobody knew where. We were rushed. They gave us some black coffee and bread. We were forced to line up, 5 people in a line. We walked long

miles. It was snowing. We sat down on the icy road. "Get up!" shouted the Hungarian Wermacht soldiers.

It was the Death March. The first night, we stayed in a school building. They gave us bread and soup. The next morning we had to line up and continue to go by foot. The Hungarian soldiers were marching with us. The SS went by jeep. We, the large group of women, were forced to go. We had no strength.

I remember a mother and a daughter who were holding each other. The daughter helped carry the mother's knapsack. We all had a blanket tied to the knapsack. When the guard saw what was happening, he told the young girl to just march or she would be taken away. We heard the word deportation. The mother and daughter were crying. The march was endless.

One night we stayed in a shack where farmers kept their machines and tools. It was a very cold night. As morning came, we had to continue to march. Whoever sat down on the roadway was taken away by truck. I could not think anymore. I was very tired and hungry. They gave us some black coffee and bread. I was weak and the uncertainty of the situation, i.e., how long we had to march and where were we going, made me sick.

We marched on the Sopronut toward Austria. My legs were hurting. There was icy mud on the road. I had a good pair of high black shoes, but my feet were very cold. Next to me was a young girl. Her knapsack was heavy. We helped each other. She gave me a fine, exquisite towel to cover my head. Such luxurious items were unheard of under our present circumstances. I treasured it dearly. One night, a few of us were lucky -- we slept in a barn.

Some women laid down on the roadside. They just could not walk anymore. They were taken away. I remember the long line of women, moaning and crying. We were wet and cold. Our food rations dwindled down to only some black coffee and then nothing at all, for about one and a half days.

I knew if I wanted to survive I must get away. I felt feverish. I

knew that I must help myself. I had a strong will to survive. I felt that nobody was helping us, nobody cared if we lived or died. I, as a young teenager, knew that nobody had the right to hurt us. They brought upon us so much suffering and hardship, just because we were Jews.

Young SS soldiers sat in a jeep, giving us hateful, arrogant looks. A few Hungarian soldiers were our guards. It was late afternoon. It was dark and icy rain was falling. I looked behind me and saw an older soldier in back of our group. I knew him from Vecsés. He was with my group when we dug the trenches. His name was Janos Fekete. He never punished us. He treated us like human beings. Without hesitation, I started to talk to him. I asked him where he was taking us. I told him how scared I was. "Don't talk to me", he said, "I can't answer you. Just walk like everybody else."

I looked at the long line of women and my eyes filled with tears. My voice choked and a cry came over me which I could not stop. The last few months of misery, the suffering, the hunger and the endless march made me feel like a wanderer, without home and family. Then between the bitter cries, I told him that I am so young and wanted to live. I was born in a small village in the county of Szabolcs, where my great grandparents, grandparents and my parents were born. They all were good citizens of Hungary. My father, who was a soldier in World War I, was now suffering at some work camp. What I did not know at the time was that my parents had perished at Auschwitz.

I asked him if he had a family and where they were. I knew that during wartime, everybody worried about their family. The old soldier looked at me, his eyes were filled with tears. He asked me what it was that I wanted. I told him that I wanted to tie my shoes. He looked away. I thanked him in a quiet voice and stayed at the back of the line. I went closer to a ditch. Along the roadside, I asked a girl who walked near me to come with me. She was too scared. I asked another woman close by. Both just continued to march. No one would join me. I stepped out of the line and

went down into the ditch, along the roadside. It was dark and raining. I was alone. I kept the towel over my head, but the night was very cold. I felt the chill. I waited until the long lines of women and the guards had marched away.

What would I do now? Here I was, alone in the darkness of a cold night, and very hungry. My coat and knapsack were very heavy from the rain. I stood up from my lying position. I ripped off the yellow star from my coat. Nobody would hurt me anymore. I wanted to live. I held a tree branch and pulled myself out of the ditch.

Standing on the road, I felt the freedom, after those long months of hardship. I felt hope within me. I was grateful to that Hungarian wermacht. My faith in people arouse again. I was free as I waited on the road for someone to ask directions.

A horse-drawn carriage went by. I asked the people to give me a ride. They did not stop. It was pouring. I did not know how to find my way. In the distance, I heard a noise. A cow-pulled carriage came, stopped for me, and gave me a ride to the nearest railroad station, which was in his village.

I had no money to pay him. He helped me out of the goodness of his heart. He did not ask any questions. In those cruel and hateful times, there were some people who understood the hardship, the suffering and in their own way, they helped. At the railroad station, the waiting rooms were open. I went in without hesitation. There was a gypsy family with young children waiting for the train. I saw they had milk and bread. I asked them for some food. They gave me bread.

I was very tired from the exhaustion of the long day and fell asleep. When I woke up in the morning, I was sitting on the cold floor, but my head was lying on a woman's lap. Strangers became my friends. The

gypsy population of Hungary was also hated and humiliated by the SS.

A train arrived in the morning hours. I went on. As Hungary was under seige, all passenger trains were taken over by the army. There was no purchasing of tickets. With long delays between stations, I finally arrived in Budapest, after two days. My clothes were wet and I was hungry and very tired.

It was late at night when I arrived at my aunt's house. I was very worried as on the streets of Budapest, there were so many SS and Arrow Cross soldiers. I was scared that they would arrest me if they saw me enter a building where Jewish people lived.

When I knocked on the door of my aunt's apartment, I heard her loud voice saying, "Ibolyka, is that you?" She was worrying and waiting for her daughter, who was also taken away for forced labor. When I entered, my aunt held me with so much love and kissed me. I told her what had happened to me. She cried for her children and was worried about the danger in Budapest. My aunt helped nurse me back to regain my strength, but I could only remain there a few days because of the riskiness of the situation.

There were rumors that all the Jews would be taken to the ghetto in the borough (Kerület) where the most Jewish people lived. In deep fear and worry, I went to my sister's apartment at Kiraly St. 23, the next day. There was an air raid. The planes were flying so low. But the Hungarian police did not let me go down to the shelter because I wore the yellow star. My life in their eyes was not important. I was a hunted Jew. I had no right to live like a human being.

My sister, Rozsi, was still working in the army factory. She was so glad to see me. I begged her to come to hide with me. I knew that was the only way to survive. But she still believed, as my parents before, that if you worked hard, nobody would hurt you. She had a passport.

Budapest became a war zone. The SS surrounded the Jews and took them away, killing them on the way to Austria. There was no law obeyed. I took off the yellow star from my coat. I would no longer tolerate being humiliated.

The last time I saw my sister was on a Sunday. The Jews were allowed out on the street two hours a day. She came to my aunt's house during that time. She was too scared to go into hiding with me. She begged me to listen to her. She was 9 years older than me. She did not want me to go into hiding. If the SS found Jews, they were severely punished. She told me her fiancée, Meir, would help. I was so worried for her. We held each other a long time. We were both crying. My aunt wanted her to go with me into hiding. But Rozsi said I should not worry about her.

I had working papers and a false birth certificate given to me by Emil Santó. He was a cousin's cousin, from the Zionist organization, who worked underground producing false documents. I went into hiding. I had hope the war would soon be over.

In December of 1944, there were air raids everyday. I was hiding in Vaci St. I got a furnished room in a private house which I shared with two other girls. I did not know them. A young man from the Zionist organization, who was a friend of Emil Santó, helped me find this rental. He knew the owner of the house, who did not ask me any questions.

The family was of German descent. They were a middle-aged couple. Their brother and mother lived with them. The brother had a photo studio in the house. The younger woman could hardly speak Hungarian. I ate breakfast with them every morning and paid them a small amount of money for room and board. They were very kind and thoughtful, never asking me questions. After the liberation, I thanked them for helping me, because they knew we were Jews.

I found work in a dress shop on Rakotcy St. The owner of the shop was a middle-aged woman and she did not ask me any questions. She saw I was sad and very hungry all the time. She paid me by day. I was ironing blouses. She gave me some clothes because I had so few to wear. She knew I was working hard.

I felt very tired. Although I was only 17 years old, my strength was gone. I worried about my sister and my family. I was all alone. I had no one to turn to for help. I was always thinking about food. My menstrual cycles still had not returned. Yet I had a strong will to fight to survive. Life was very precious to me.

The Jewish people of Budapest were taken to the ghetto. So often I saw on the streets, large groups of men, women and children, with their arms up above their head, faces pale and shaking. The children were crying. But the bestial SS soldiers forced them to march to an unknown place, where they lost their lives in the most brutal of ways at the hand of their tormentor. If any Jewish people were caught in hiding, the SS took them to the Gestapo headquarters on Andrasi St. They were tortured and shot. Jews in large numbers were taken to the Danube River. They had to undress. They were shot and the SS threw their bodies into the river by the hundreds. The beautiful blue Danube became red from the Jewish blood.

I talked to my roommates, but they never asked me from where I came. I respected their private lives. One day, after returning from work, I found one of my roommates crying. I asked her how I could help. She said her sister, Aliza, was in trouble. Up until this time I did not know that they were sisters. In her own anguish, Ella told me Aliza went to the fruit market and the super from their building recognized her and followed her. Ella was with her sister but managed to escape. Aliza was taken away by the Hungarian police to the Gestapo

headquarters, on Andrasi St., torture house.

Late evening, two SS soldiers came. They were looking for Ella. Aliza gave them the address where they were hiding. While Ella was collecting her belongings, I ran down to the liquor store and bought bottles of wine. I thought maybe if I invited them to drink in comradeship they would forget all about Ella, or at least this would give her a chance to escape. My plan was unsuccessful. I begged Ella to tell them she was not Jewish and try to get away, but she was scared. They arrested her.

After liberation, I went to look for the sisters, but they lost their young lives with the other large group of people who went through the torture at the Gestapo headquarters.

I was shaken when the SS soldiers took Ella away. All night, sleep would not come to my eyes. Every moment seemed like long hours for me. Every noise made me frightened and think the SS were coming back.

Early morning, I took a few necessary clothes and left without saying goodbye. I felt so lonely. I was alone in the large city of Budapest. I had no place to go. It was a very cold winter. The streets were covered with snow. I felt the cold wind and it made me shiver. Where was I to go. My aunt, the Jews of the city were already in the ghetto. My sister Rozsi was taken away. I knew the ghetto was surrounded by a large fence and on every street corner stood SS guards and Hungarian Arrow Cross men.

I went to the tailor shop on Rakotcy St. It was early morning. After the long walk from Vaci St. I was so tired. The owner looked at me and asked if I was sick. The tears started. I could not talk. She gave me breakfast. She did not ask any more questions. I felt she knew that I was Jewish because she asked if I wanted bread tickets. She gave me a black skirt, hugged me and said the war would soon be over. It was so heartwarming for me. In my desperate situation, there were

people who cared about others and understood my suffering. I thanked and kissed her. She told me I could work a few hours. She paid me. Late afternoon I left.

The only place I could think of to go to was the hospital on Veselenyi St. The Jewish hospital at wartime was under the Swedish Red Cross. The hospital was located close to the main gate out of the ghetto. I walked in. The guard at the doorway did not stop me. I still remember how lucky I felt. I went to look for Meir, Rozsi's fiancée. He was a resident there. I asked him to help me stay there. I had no place to go.

The hospital was overcrowded with Hungarian soldiers. The following day, I met with the director of nurses. He listened to me as I told him I had no place to go. I said that I was Jewish and very scared what would happen to me. He assured me I could stay there but not to tell anyone that I was Jewish. Under the supervision of Elisabeth (Erzsébet) Sagi on the third floor, I was assigned duties and allowed to sleep in the nurses dormitory.

The city was under siege. The Russian army was fighting in the suburbs, closing in on Budapest. There was very little food to eat at the hospital, only tomato soup, beans and a small amount of bread, plus black coffee. There was not enough medicine. The doctors were operating with little anesthesia. There was no clean linen to change. I was working long hours as large numbers of injured were brought in. Doctors and nurses were overworked. The typhoid epidemic began from hunger and dirt. American and British planes bombed the city everyday.

One day, I was so desperate that I went back to Dohany St., to the bakery where I used to shop. It was a cold, snowy day. I had some bread tickets, but there was a long line. Suddenly, the saleslady recognized me. She knew that I was Jewish and was not permitted out in the street as all the Jews were in the ghetto. She told me to wait and later gave me one

large loaf of bread. I was so happy. I took the bread to the hospital and shared it with my patients.

One morning, my supervisor sent me down to the storage room for linens. We knew there was no supply of clean linens anymore, but I had to follow her orders. As I walked down from the third floor, in the second floor hallway, I met a nurse friend, Véber Anikó, and two doctors. I wanted to talk to my friend, but I knew I had to return quickly to work. As I left the second floor, I held onto the banister. Suddenly, there was a loud detonation. A bomb hit the hospital through the hallway window. My friend and the doctors died instantly. I survived without any injury. That was a miracle. G-d saved me and gave me the strength to continue my life.

During the first week of January, the work at the hospital became unbearable. Large groups of soldiers were brought in. Many nights, I stayed up late hours to comfort the wounded. I remember Joska, a Hungarian soldier. One of his legs was amputated. We did not have enough medicine. All night I sat at his bedside and put cold compresses on his head. I told him the war soon would be over and he would go home to his family. I remember I went down to the kitchen, where I became friendly with the workers. They made me tea and I gave it to Joska because he had a high fever. But unfortunately, he did not survive.

During the night, he asked my name. I told him I was Jewish and in hiding. He asked, "How can you sit up all night with me when you are suffering so much from us?" I assured him that I would take care of him. My duty as a nursing student was to help sick people.

I had a good friend in the hospital, a woman doctor. She was middle-aged. She told me I must take typhoid shots because the epidemic spread so rapidly so everybody's life was in danger. At the hospital, there no longer was any hot water. Patients beds could not be changed. I used to wash my hair with cold water. I was afraid of lice. The hunger was

the worst. The second week of January we were starving. The hospital's food supply consisted of black coffee, tomato soup and white sugar. People became very sick with diarrhea.

One day I told my colleagues that I would go out to search for some food in Dohány St. Near to the Varos liget, the wooded city park area, was a food stand. For a few hours during wintertime, vendors sold hot baked pumpkin slices and baked chestnuts. As I walked towards the city park, in the middle of the street I saw a few men wearing white fur coats and fur hats lying in the snow. They had guns. It was late afternoon, but even in the dark, I could see more men in the wooded area. I was so surprised, I just stood there. Then one man motioned me to go away.

I returned to the hospital and told Elisabeth Sagi what I saw. She told me the Russian army was fighting the Germans street by street. The following day the whole time, we heard shots. The hospital was located very close to the German headquarters and the ghetto. The nyilas went into the ghetto and killed many Jews.

On January 17, Russian soldiers came into the hospital. They told us we were free to go. I remember a young Russian soldier singing in Russian, "Ras we tali yablioni a gruse" and "Jesly zav travoine". We forgot about the lice and hunger. We drank black coffee and could not sleep all night.

I stayed at the hospital. I could not leave the sick people who were depending on my care. The next morning, I went out and watched as the Russian soldiers broke down the ghetto gate and all the people from the ghetto came out. Some put their belongings on a wheelbarrow. Mostly older people, women and young children came out. Their faces were so pale and they were very skinny.

We all went through such terrible times but with a strong will to survive. I told many older people that they could come to the hospital to recuperate, but the medical care **was not** in full service. We did not

have enough food. The Russian army opened some soup kitchens. Also, they gave out soup in the streets.

I went up to soldiers and asked in Russian, "Tovaris dy malinku chleba", give me some bread please. But the answer was, "Nyema chleba", no bread. Many people in the hospital came down with typhoid. The work was very hard. There were not enough nurses. The nursing supervisor asked me to stay on. I continued working and decided that I wanted to become a nurse.

Budapest was in a rubble. I had no place to go. After the liberation, I searched for my sister but nobody could give me information about what happened to her. I was alone, a teenager without a home. I heard that the Jews from towns and villages were taken away and none returned.

It was March, 1945. There was no place where I could turn to for information about my family. In April, I left the hospital and with very few clothes, one army blanket and no money, I went to the Kelety railroad station. Passenger trains were not in service yet. After long hours, I boarded an army train filled with Russian soldiers. They gave me some food. The trip took 4 days. Under very difficult travelling conditions, I finally arrived in Kisvarda, 15 kilometers from my native village.

Hungry, very scared and tired, I walked to the village. I went to my home, but the house where I grew up was not my old home. Three families moved in. There was not one piece of furniture that was ours. The vegetable and flower gardens were no more. The families who moved in were from the village. They knew my parents well. They offered me food, but I could not eat. My tears were flowing. I went to the neighbor, Baloghneni's house. She asked me to stay with her.

From 11 Jewish families in my village, I was all that there was. Many people in the village were nice to me. My friend Margit invited me

to stay with her. During the time when I was in Budapest, she married a well to do gentleman. The marriage did not last and now she was divorced.

After a short time, I got back our sewing machine and took up sewing. I was working and received milk, bread and eggs from the village people. I waited in the village with hope that somebody from my family would come home.

In June, I heard from my father's friend, Ellias Rosenberg, who had come home to Kisvarda. He wanted me to stay in the town, but I remained in the village. During the summer months, young people from the camps began coming home. Three sisters, Clara, Magda and Erzsike Ziegler returned to Mándok, a little town close to my village. When we met and I told them that I was alone, they invited me to live with them. They survived the hardships of Auschwitz, losing their parents, brothers and other sisters. We became close friends and even till today remain my dearest friends.

I am thankful and grateful to G-d for helping me through those hard times. Without those sisters, I was so lonely. They understood me and shared with me their food and home.

I often went to Kisvarda, where the main railroad station was located. I waited and hoped to hear some news about my family. One day in July, it was late afternoon, I was waiting for the arrival of the train from Budapest. I had a large basket filled with sandwiches and fruit to give out to the people coming home from the camps.

In one of the cars, I saw two men speaking to each other. One looked very pale and sad. I offered a sandwich to him. He refused to take it. When I asked him to talk to me, he started to cry. He did not know that I was Jewish. He was so depressed. He could not share his sad story.

I saw how he was in despair and I wanted so much to help him. He did not

know what happened to his family, the Adlers of Nagydobos, parents and eight brothers and sisters.

I stayed with him on the train and took him and his cousin to my relative's home, to Jassi Viesner in Nyirmada. He welcomed us. He gave a good supper and a place to sleep. In the morning Bernat and his cousin said goodbye to us, and asked me for my address. I felt very sad that after long months of suffering in camps, so many people went home to empty houses, with nobody waiting for them, and having no one to share their terrible experiences.

I continued to go to the village often and made ready one room in our house with furniture. One of the families had moved out. The room was what used to be the large shul. I was waiting and hoping that someone from my family of eight would return.

In August of 1945, Clara Goldstein came home. I asked her to come to my house. She came from a large family. In September, I received a postcard addressed to my father, Jacob Klein. My sister, Neche, wrote from a hospital in Germany that soon she would be coming home. My life changed. I became so happy. I felt that my prayers were answered. Somebody from my family, my sister, survived. I would not be alone anymore.

She arrived in November, weak and pale. Neche had typhoid after liberation from the camps. She was so thin and looked sick, but with time, she started to become stronger. My sister told me the terrible things that happened to our family, the ghetto in Kisvarda, the freight trains to Auschwitz, the selection. She held my mother's hand, helped her down from the train, but felt somebody pulling her away. It was a man with striped clothes. She started to cry and ran after my mother but was forced to the other side. My sisters, Margit and Ilonka, such beautiful young girls, were helping the Beck and Goldstein families with their little children. Both of them were taken with my mother. They lost their young lives at the hand of the bestial tormentors.

After two months at Auschwitz, Neche still was not selected to a working group. These selections were done 3 times a week. She knew that the only way to survive was to be a part of one. But she was not picked because of her small frame.

One morning, during the formation of a selection, Neche sneaked into line with those chosen for work detail when the block leader (eltestre) was not looking. She was taken to Mathausen. My sister was in a working camp in Gurckirhen and liberated in Rabensbrock. After liberation, Neche became very religious. I believe that her miraculous survival was a gift from the Lord to her and me, because from the moment she came home, my life changed. She was sick, but her emotional strength helped her recover. We shared with each other our harsh experiences, the hunger, the cruelty and together we mourned our family who we loved so much, but lost to the terrible genocide.

One day, my sister called to me, appearing very troubled. She wanted to tell me something, but could not talk, no words came. I saw that she was broken. We sat down. She took out from her knapsack a little box covered with brown paper. It was a bar of soap. In between sobs, she confided to me that this soap must be buried. Someone told her after liberation that the soap was made from human source. Human beings in the camp were tortured, inmates were used for experiments and their skeleton bodies were used for lampshades and soap.

My sister wanted me to continue my education. In the spring of 1946, I went to Nyiregyhaza and attended a seminar for Hebrew and Jewish study programs. For 2 years, I continued in a Chakshara (training program for trades) of Bnei Akiva. My sister got married in 1946. Her house became my home. In the Chaksara, during summertime, we studied agriculture in Gestered. Once again, the Zionist spirit, the love of Eretz Yisrael, the Land of Israel, gave us the strength to continue working for a Jewish Homeland.

In May, 1948, the UN recognized the State of Israel. With tears in our eyes, we went out in the street, dancing and singing. We, the generation who suffered so much, had a land where we could go. We could now be proud instead of scared to be a Jew. We could practice our religion openly and not in fear. In June, 1948, I went to Israel from Fiume, a port city by the Italian/Yugoslavian border, on an Italian ship called St. Antonies.

When I arrived, it was the War of Independence and our ship could not land in the Harbor of Haifa. We arrived at night and boats waited for us. The first 3 weeks we were at a Beit Heolim, housing unit for new comers, near Haifa.

The beginning was hard. The young man to whom I gave the sandwich at the railroad station of Kisvarda left Hungary at the end of 1945 and after six months, he arrived in Palestine. During those years, we exchanged letters. When I arrived in Israel, I could hardly wait to see him. But he was hurt in the War of Independence in Kakun, near Tulkerem. These were towns in the middle of the country, around the West Bank, not far from Netanya. I visited him in Zichron Yakov Bet Chevraha, a rehabilitation center. We got married in Kfar haRoe, a religious village of the Mizrachi group, in September, 1948.

Life in Israel gave me so much pleasure. My goal was to continue studying. I did not become a nurse. After my first son, Yehuda, was born, I studied early childhood education. I was young and idealistic. To work with young children gave me so much happiness. In 1957 our second son, Arnon, was born. My husband Bernat's family, 3 brothers and one sister, lived in the United States and he wanted to live near them.

We came to the United States in 1958. In my heart, I am very grateful to G-d, who helped us, after the terrible war, to have a family and live in freedom in America. I visit Israel often. I love

the land.

It is over forty years that I have been employed in childcare centers and nursery schools. It gives me so much pleasure to work with children of all races, cultures and religions. During the years at my jobs, I have met people from many different backgrounds who have showed me so much appreciation for my services.

When I told co-workers about the suffering of the Jewish people during the Holocaust, they gave me so much love and understanding. Ruby Ramsey, the director of one of the schools, said to me, "I am so ashamed that I didn't help your people when you were in so much suffering."

Unfortunately, we cannot change the past. But this terrible tragedy must teach everyone that hate is the biggest enemy of mankind. It does not matter what color one's skin is, or to what race or religion they belong. We all must work together to better our lives. And we must help our fellow human being.

When I am with young children, I try to teach them the most important human values - love, pride in our heritage and respect. When they will be grown, they should then be independent, loving and kind people. Mankind can only survive if we care about each other.

This G-d given beautiful world, the miracle of life have to be cherished and appreciated. Everyday is a blessing. Just to look at the beauty of nature and be a part of this great world is worth everything. One must work hard at this. We are responsible for our children's future, that they should have the opportunity to live in a peaceful world.

During the years, my husband has awoken frequently choking, and from a very restless night. He would not remember the bad dreams and did not want to talk about it or what he went through. I knew that he

must of had terrible experiences at the camps during the Holocaust.

Now, after 50 years from the time of the liberation, through help and patience, he has opened up to me and told me the following story.

I was born in the village of Nagydobos. My parents were hard working, religious people. We had a little house, a small garden and a tailor shop where my father, who was 68 years old, my brother and I were working.

Before the holidays, we worked from early morning until late at night. My mother's work was never finished because we had 9 children in our family. The youngest, my sister Helen, helped my mother with household chores. It was very hard to support a large family in the 1930's. As a young child, I went shoeless on the street except for winter and the Shabbat and Jewish holidays. I had formal schooling through sixth grade.

But my life was good. Our family was close and I loved meeting and being with my friends. I loved the life in the village. I remember my mother, how she used to help the poor beggars with food and clothes. Every Friday, she baked the challah bread for Shabbat. She never complained to us. Her strength was her goodwill to help the unfortunates. Everybody liked and respected her.

When I was learning tailoring, at age 16, I was obligated to participate in Boys Scout training. While the Gentile boys used guns for training, we, the Jewish boys, had shovels. When we marched through the villages, everybody laughed at us. One night, we had to watch a movie. It was an anti-Semitic picture. As I tried to leave through the doorway, one boy picked up a glass and broke it over my head. Nobody came to my aid. There was lots of anti-Semitism. Many Gentiles understood Yiddish so if we did not want them to know what we were saying, we had to speak in Hebrew.

In 1943, there were anti-Jewish laws. One day, a gendarme came to our house. He said we were under house arrest. Rumors were heard that many Jewish families were taken away to the Nyester River in the Ukraine. My parents panicked. What would happen to us? Shabbat morning, I took my bike and rode to the town of Matészalka, to the governor's office. When I travelled by bike through the village of Opáji, the Yeshiva students

ran out from the synagogue alarmed and asked what happened and where I was riding to on Shabbat. I told them my family was in danger. They wanted to deport us out of Hungary.

When I reached the governor's office, I knocked on the door. I was let inside. I begged them to allow me to see the governor. He came out. I started to cry, "Please help my parents. My family is in danger. They want to deport us." He said that he wanted to help us and I should go to the hospital and request that the head doctor send out an emergency care ambulance to pick up my father. Also, that doctor needed to give me a certificate stating my father is sick and cannot be moved out of Hungary. My father was transported to the hospital, where he stayed a week. The governor saved our lives.

In 1943, I was called in to serve in the forced labor at Kassa. I stayed there two months. Then I was transferred to Abawy Szanto, where I worked for 3 months. My life in Hungary became very difficult. Food was very expensive and with my brothers and sisters, I went to work in the fields.

We needed tickets to buy flour and wood. Our neighbors were our employers. There was no electricity or hot water in the village. We baked our own bread. My poor mother had such a hard life.

On March 19, 1944, German forces occupied Hungary. In Nagydobos, the Jewish people met in the synagogue for morning and evening prayers everyday. News of the German occupation frightened us. We did not know what would happen next.

In the early 1940's, we heard what was going on in Germany and in the Hungarian Parliament. We read in the newspapers that in 1938, the first anti-Jewish laws were in effect in Hungary, the quota for professionals. In Germany in 1939, "Die Strumer", a German newspaper, wrote that Hitler said, "The Jews are our misfortune. Jews are good only for slave labor. The master race is the Aryan, the German people." We knew

they were anti-Semitic, but we never believed that people would be taken to concentration camps, forced into slave labor and slaughtered like animals. Unfortunately, up till the last minute we thought that help would come.

There were people in the village who were anti-Semitic. But even in our deepest fear, we could not believe the brutal future which was waiting for us. As we were praying in our terrible situation, there were rumors that the Regent Admiral Miklos Horthy would not let his Jewish citizens get hurt. We believed, as honest, hard working people of the Hungarian society, we would be saved. But one week after the SS occupation, a new anti-Jewish law came out. We had to wear the yellow star on the left side of our chest.

Passover, the holiday which celebrates freedom and liberation from slavery in Egypt, came. But the Passover of 1944 was a dark remembrance of the suffering of the Jewish people over centuries, when they were exiled from their land and persecuted because of their religion.

On the first day of Passover, all the Jewish people were notified that we were forbidden to go to any office, stores, schools or banks. We were not allowed to communicate with our Christian neighbors. Everyday new restrictions came from the office of the village mayor. Every Jewish family had to bring in their jewelry and each family member had to register at the mayor's office. We were counted like sheep.

We were ordered to pack up our belongings. On the last day of Passover we were taken to Matészalka ghetto. We would be separated from our Christian neighbors. We packed 50 kilograms per person, the most important necessities. A horse-drawn carriage waited for us in front of our house. So we had to leave our home.

As the carriage started to move, my mother looked back and ~~then~~ shrieked, "Where is our cat? Who will take care of the cat?" My sister went back to the house. Erzsike opened the window. Our cat was standing

on the porch, restless, sensing something bad was happening.

We went through the village where we lived our entire life. Some of our neighbors were sad. Some people were hiding out of shame. But there were people in the village who showed no sorrow. It is very sad that some people were even smiling.

Before arriving at the Matészalka ghetto, a gendarme jumped up on our wagon, where I sat with my parents and sisters Elisabeth and Helen. The Hungarian gendarme took a match and lighted it. Then he burned my father's beard. We were screaming. We were in such shock. But nobody came to our aid. My father's pain was unbearable. The gendarme stopped our carriage near the cemetery of Matészalka. More torture came. One Hungarian policeman took three young men and tied them to his bicycle. As he rode, they were forced to run.

We arrived in Matészalka late afternoon. The ghetto was in the middle of the town, surrounded by a high wooden fence. We saw hundreds of people in overcrowded conditions. My father said, "It's a shame what is happening. If the mayor of Matészalka will hear about it, he will help us." But during the seven weeks we stayed in the ghetto, no Hungarian official came to supervise over our situation. Four high ranking SS soldiers gave the orders.

The food supply was very little. Families who brought in food shared with others. Many Christians from the villages came and brought over bread and potatoes. But the gendarme did not let them in. Some people waited until evening and then threw the food in, through the fence. There were rumors in the ghetto that we would be taken to Austria to work, or help would come and we would stay in Hungary. There would be an exchange, people for machinery.

Life was unbearable in the ghetto. For children and older people, especially, the suffering, the hunger, the diarrhea, the shortage of

medication. Many people became sick. What could a mother say to the child when they cried for food. The mothers had no milk to nurse their babies. The elders in the ghetto asked for help. But there were no ears that heard the Jewish cries. The answer was more cruel treatment.

Everyday people were taken to the Gestapo headquarters and interrogated about jewelry and money. Their anguished cries were heard.

One morning, two rabbis were called to the old synagogue building. One rabbi was from Matészalka and one from Opalyi. They went through horrible torture. The gendarme burned their legs with hot iron bars. The people in the ghetto shuddered. All the adults fasted. The two rabbis did not survive. It was a day for prayer. They passed away in the ghetto of Matészalka.

The next morning, after seven weeks in the ghetto, police headquarters gave the order that the ghetto was to be liquidated. In three days, every person had to pack 50 kilograms of belongings. We could take clothing in a knapsack, but our money and banknotes had to be given over to the police.

Early morning, we had to line up. It was the last day of Shavuot. This is the holiday when we received the Torah at Mount Sinai, the Ten Commandments which proclaim the law to the world. The Gestapo and the Hungarian gendarme destroyed the prayer books and the Torah, the writings of the five books of the Old Testament. Their hearts were void of any human feelings. They were barbarians. They brought unbearable suffering onto the Jewish people. These horrid individuals knew no fear of G-d.

Many people started to say the Yiskor, the memorial prayer. Everyone had tears in their eyes. We saw the freight trains, the cattle cars, as we stood at the train station. SS soldiers were waiting for us. The trains were ready to start their terrible mission of taking

people who lived for centuries in those little towns and villages. Leaving their native land with knapsack on their back, parents held their children. Families were trying to stay together. As we stood there, everyone became so quiet.

Suddenly, we felt the uncertainty of the times. Some older men whispered the morning prayers. The SS gave orders in rough arrogant voices, "Schnell, geh schneller", go faster. The people looked like walking shadows in the early dawn. Young children started to cry.

The cattle cars waited for us, 80 people per car. The gendarme counted. People became numbers. I went up to the wagon, holding my father's hand. My mother and sisters Erzsike and Helen sat down in the corner. There was a little window covered with barbed iron rods. The cattle car was bolted shut from the outside. There was no place to move inside.

People were lethargic. The heat, the hunger, the fear paralyzed them. Rumors spread that we would be taken to Austria, by the Polish border. We heard an SS loud voice, "If you will work, you will eat. If not, you all will die."

Helen, my youngest sister, looked out through the window. A loud noise rang out. The SS saw her and shot her through the window. The bullet hit her in the head. She died in my arms. The SS opened the door and upon seeing my sister, her face bleeding, asked how old she was. One of the young men from my village who knew German answered, "She is 18 years old." The SS said, "Das war schön", that is nice. My mother bent down and said in Yiddish, "She is my daughter. She is dead. For her, there is no more suffering." And with a cry she said again in Yiddish, "My daughter, pray for us and pray for mankind because it is the end of civilization, the end of the world."

Everyone in the wagon started to cry. We were in Krakow, Poland. The train went at a fast speed. After one day, in the early afternoon, we arrived in Auschwitz, Poland. When the train came to a halt, the door opened and men wearing striped uniforms came up to the wagon screaming, "Alle heraus", everybody out. People wanted to take their little bags. Some people had prayer books and pictures or jewelry hidden in their knapsacks, things which belonged to us. It was our heirloom, passed down from our great grandparents, but we were forced out of the wagon in the most brutal way. We had to line up.

In addition to the screaming, dogs were barking at us. We were treated like animals arriving at the slaughterhouse. We were forced to march through lines of SS soldiers, looking at us with cruelty in their eyes and whips in their hands. Men were separated from women. I saw my mother taken away. I held my father's hand, which was shaking. I saw a tall handsome man in an SS uniform who stood erect and gave the orders. He had a black stick in his hands. He pointed to the left. My father was separated from me. My father looked at me with tears in his eyes.

I wanted to go with him. He was old and needed me. But the monster of the cruel German machinery hit my hand with the black stick and told me in Hungarian, "Fiam menj a jobboldalra", son you go to the right side. I tried again to reach my father's hand but Mengele, the wild beast in human form, became impatient and a man in a striped uniform pushed me to the right side. I saw my father walk, his shoulders bent over, with tired steps to the left. This was the last time I saw him.

Our group had to march through the gates of Auschwitz. "Schnell, schnell", hurry, hurry. Those words were heard. The SS were barking at us. They took us to a large room. We had to take off our clothes and wait naked for hours to receive our striped uniforms. We had to shower and they shaved our heads. We joined the large group of inmates

at the death camp. I was in a daze. The long train ride, the hunger, the screaming, the separation from my parents, my little sister's death. I did not know what happened to my older sister.

The SS forced us to go to the barracks. I got some soup, but the taste was so bad I had to force myself to finish it. At night, I went through the barracks looking for relatives and friends from my village. There were 10 young men who I knew from my village and neighboring villages. One of my friend's from Matészalka, Yenö Weiss, went to the fence and got electricuted. He did not have the strength to continue to fight for his life.

I was assigned to go to C lager with a large group of men. There were a few gypsies. My first day we were woken up at 5 AM. Tired, hungry and cold in the early morning hours, we were counted. We received black coffee. I walked around the barrack hungry and thirsty. There was no water to drink. We smelled the smoke. We asked the Polish prisoners in Yiddish what was happening from where the smoke was coming. Their answer was that they were burning our clothes, what they took away from us.

At noon, they gave us some soup. We had to stand in a circle, 10 of us. One aluminum dish was filled up with soup. There were no spoons. Everyone had a few sips.. People watched each other. The SS were standing close by and enjoyed the degradation of the inmates, who after a short time at Auschwitz became wide eyed fearful people whose only thought was how to avoid the whips and how to hide the little piece of brown bread overnight.

After 3 weeks in Auschwitz, we got the order that we were leaving the camp. We were directed, 5 people in a line, to walk to the trains. We were a large group of people, 3,000 men waiting in the early morning hours to be taken away from the death camp. We were the lucky ones, 80 persons per wagon car. Neither food nor water was given to us.

They placed a community pot in our car to take care of our biological needs. We traveled for 2 days. Many people fainted from the heat and hunger.

We arrived at Mathausen. It was very hot in July of 1944. There was a heat wave. We hardly had the strength to stand on our feet. Mathausen is located in Austria, not far from the Danube River. When our train door opened at the station, we saw SS soldiers standing there, waiting for us with whips and rubber sticks in their hands.

We were forced to line up, 5 in a line, and had to walk up a hill. Inmates who wore glasses or had gold teeth were shot dead. The SS said, "You were a doctor or a lawyer at home." After miles of walking up hills, we reached the camp. The SS were hitting everybody with the rubber sticks and screaming, "Laufe schneller", go faster.

After a few hours at the camp, they gave us a piece of schmaltz herring. We were very hungry, following 2 days of starvation. We ate quickly. Then we looked for water, but they did not give us any. We were so thirsty. This was a terrible torture. We were locked up in a large barrack, but we did not even have a place to stand up. People were on top of each other. In this terrible situation, many people died.

I was close to a window. With others, we broke the glass. It started drizzling. I put out my hand for a little rain water. This was a miracle of survival. I heard that hundreds of inmates died at Mathausen, from the torture which never ended. The chances of survival at this camp were very slim. The SS, with rubber stick in hand, would hit the "halflings", the prisoners, all the time.

We received our numbers at this camp. My number was U.70,154. We became an object of the SS machinery. There was a yellow shape we had to wear on our chest, the letter U, which stood for Hungarian Jew.

During our 3 weeks at Mathausen, we slept on the floor at night. We were treated poorly, given very little food. The SS continuously

hit us. We knew we could not survive there. When we heard that they were taking us away to a working camp, our hope rose.

When the lager fuhrer asked us our occupation, my friend and I decided that in order to save our lives, we would say we are field workers. But I had a trade. I learned tailoring, starting at age 14. I knew the trade well. When my number was called, I answered the truth. Perhaps it was my pride. I wanted to show the SS that I was a human being, not just a number, and that I had a respectable occupation which nobody could take away from me. I said, "I am a tailor." I would not bend before him.

When the SS finished the questions, they sent us to a large room. There were mattresses on the floor, one mattress for 2 people. Early next morning, the SS woke us up. We had to line up, 5 in a row, and walk down the hill to the train station. Loaded onto freight cars, we travelled long hours.

We arrived at Linz. The SS shouted for everyone to get out. We changed to another train, which brought us to Ebensee. When the wagon door opened, we saw a beautiful picturesque town. We were very hungry and tired, but the fresh air, the serenity of this little town, gave us hope. We will work. We will be treated like human beings deserve to be treated, after all the hardships of Mathausen, so I thought. As we went through the streets, we saw beautiful little houses with white muslin curtains, flower pots on the window sills. The pleasant aroma of flowers, the grass, like green carpeting, covered the lawns, tree-lined streets. We heard birds chirping. We walked in a daze.

I looked at my striped uniform. It is true all this. How can it be that people still live a normal life. The beautiful scenery of the Tirol Mountains, the shiny blue river in the middle of the town. My hope rose. I wanted to survive and live like a human being. Suddenly,

like awakening from a dream, I heard the SS start barking, "Schnell, schnell", fast, go fast.

We walked up a hill for a few miles. We arrived. We went past a large gate, lined up, 5 in a row. There was an electric fence surrounding the camp, red bulbs were burning. We were ordered to go to a large room, where we had to stand on line. The block fuhrer came. He walked between the lines, punching everybody. He hit me in the face. I felt blood coming from my nose. He ordered everyone to lie down on the floor. After 2 hours, he called out our numbers and names. When he called my number, I was very scared. I got up from the floor and stood before him. He was worse than a wild beast. His name was Gary.

He asked me, "Are you a tailor? If you're lying, tomorrow your place will be the crematorium!" My body was shivering from fear. "Ja, ich bin ein schneider", yes, I am a tailor, I answered. He took me to a small office, gave me water to wash my face, told me to sit down and gave me a jacket. He told me to put in three pockets. He gave me needle and thread, but there was no scissors. I asked him for a knife and I worked hard, knowing I must finish the job as my life depended on it.

I was afraid, as I had to do everything by hand. There was no sewing machine or iron. After 4 hours, I finished the pockets and showed the block fuhrer. He said to me, "You are my man."

The kapo came in. I put pockets in his jacket too. The kapo gave me some bread. I felt very lucky and thanked G-d that I had something to eat.

After 2 days, I was transferred to Barrack II, where a German gypsy was the barrack fuhrer. His name was Tony. In the barracks, there were 400 people of many different nationalities. I spoke good Yiddish so I understood the German language when the barrack fuhrer spoke to me. Tony gave me tailoring work and I always did a good job.

He gave me some food, mostly a bowl of soup. I was sent out to work in the tunnel but late evening I always did tailoring. I worked very hard. Tony always told me, "Alle Juden müssen kaputtgehn", I hate the Jews. "But you must stay alive to work for me". I always tried to satisfy him.

I had a friend from my village of Nagydobos with me in the camp. I knew that Kalla Lajmi and Jenö Mermemstein from Gyüre, were feeling weak. I told Tony that I needed some people to help me with the tailoring. They worked with me and got extra food. They were very happy that I helped them. People did not survive if they had to work in the tunnel everyday.

It was September of 1944. Even the schreiber, accountant, who was a Christian Czechoslovakian prisoner, named Anthony Opcsared, gave me work. The day in Ebensee started at 5:30 AM. Everyone had to line up for zählappel, the counting of roll call. Even the people who died during the night had to be carried out in a large wooden box. After 2 hours, we went back to the barracks where we got black coffee and a little piece of brown bread. In the early morning hours, we heard the sirens. There were air raids. We had to go into the tunnel. We were happy that freedom would come soon.

There were 3 shifts for the tunnel. Our work was very difficult. We had to carry heavy stones and put them on wagons. I was sent out to the tunnel daytime. In the evenings, I did the tailoring with my 2 friends. Sometimes we worked till midnight. Then we got some food from Tony and the kapo. While working so many hours was very tiresome, I forced myself to stay awake. In those miserable circumstances, I knew that only one thing would save my life and that of my friends-- to have a little more soup or bread. I had to sew everything by hand. It took me weeks to make a pair of pants. But I always finished and

it gave me pride that I still could do a good job. I felt that I was still a good tailor.

So many people died in the tunnel, from heavy stones falling on them. The injured received no help. Who did not work, did not get food. People died by the hundreds everyday.

It was hard for us to know what date Rosh HaShana and Yom Kippur would be on. We knew that we must observe the holiday fast. I decided to talk to Tony. I was afraid because I knew how much he hated the Jews. But the men from Block II counted on me. I told Tony, "Please forgive me, but I must ask you a favor. If it is possible, please do it. If not, don't punish us." He said, "What do you want, tailor." I asked him if he heard about our highest holiday. He told me to talk. I requested him to save our food portion for after fasting on Yom Kippur. I said that we would give him our cigarettes. Every 10 days we received 5 cigarettes, so we would have a few hundred. He replied, "Aren't you afraid to tell me this?" I answered, "Our life has no hope here. Yom Kippur is our highest holiday." He did not say anything.

We waited. When Yom Kippur came, we were nervous. What bad things would happen to us? We were not sure about finding a place to daven, to pray. In the camp, not far from our barracks, was a wooded area. At Kol Nidre night, they sent us to work in the tunnel. I talked there with a few people who decided to join us. Around 10 AM, on Yom Kippur, we went out to the woods. It was a bright sunny morning. We started to daven. We were about 300 people.

Suddenly, we felt water coming on us. We started to run. The fire hose from a truck poured water over us. We panicked. There were SS on every side, surrounding us. They hit us with rubber sticks. We ran back to our barracks. After a half hour, we heard over the loud speaker, "All Jewish prisoners get on line." They took us to a place where there were lots of rocks. We were ordered to take a rock on our shoulder and

carry it back and forth. While we carried the heavy rocks, the SS hit us, just like in Egypt when the Jewish people were slaves to Pharaoh.

A few hours passed. They let us go back to our barracks. When evening came, we were very weak and tired from the cruel punishment and extremely hungry. Tony, to whom we gave the cigarettes, ordered the kitchen to make us hot farina with milk. That was the best food I ever had in the camp. Plus everybody could get a little extra. I was so proud. Many people thanked me for making the arrangements with the block fuhrer. Unfortunately, Tony could not help us when the SS tortured us.

Winter came, bringing much snowfall to the Tirol Mountains. There were no warm clothes. The suffering was unbearable. Left over from my tailoring work were some material and blanket pieces, which I gave to my friends. We put them on our feet to keep warm.

Every second Sunday we were off. We had to clean the barracks and that was the only time we came together with relatives and friends. The one question on our lips was when would freedom come. We all worried how we would survive the harsh winter. Our food portion was so small, a little soup at noon made from potato peels, a small piece of brown bread at night. The hunger was terrible, as was the torture.

When the snow fell, we had to go out from the barracks with our wooden shoes and canvas top and stomp on the snow. The SS would laugh at us. We were as thin as skeletons. The masters of the Aryan race stood there with high boots and warm uniforms. They enjoyed our misery. We wore the striped uniforms made from cotton. There was no undergarment. They gave us an old sweater and I remember I had a gray blanket which covered me at night. We did not have a coat to wear.

One day, Tony called me into his office. He wanted to give me a warm sweater. I chose a good one. When I was a block away, a Russian halfing stopped me. He said I was wearing his sweater. I said no, that

I just received it. He started to fight. He hit me. A German civilian was walking by. He stopped the fight between us and took us to the Russian halfling's barrack. I asked him to please help me and go to Barrack II and tell Tony to come here. After a short time, Tony came and he said, "This is my tailor and I gave him this sweater." He saved me from a big fight.

To survive the cold winter, people were stealing from each other. Even shoes were taken. I used to hide my bread portion under my straw mattress. Sometimes I woke up at night so hungry that I finished my little piece of bread before anybody could steal it.

Once every two weeks we had to go to the washroom to take a shower. We had to leave our halfling uniform in the barracks. We covered ourselves with a blanket, which was disinfected while we took the shower. They shaved our heads, leaving a stripe in the middle. They shaved all the hair from our body. I was always scared. Very often they cut me. We were treated so inhumanely. Our barrack was extremely cold.

After working hard in the tunnel, I could not wait to lay down on my bunk. Every bunk in the barrack was numbered. When they gave the small food portion, our bunk number was called out in German. One evening, I was so tired that I did not hear when my number was called. The kapo came with a rubber stick in his hand and started to hit me. I got punished he said for not paying attention. We were punished for anything and everything.

When he gave me my little piece of bread, I could not eat. My back hurt so much that I could not sleep all night. During the night in our barrack, there was moaning and crying. Sometimes we heard a loud scream. People had bad dreams and so often people died in our barracks during the night. The SS called the sickness "flagmone".

In my barrack was a father and son. One night when the kapo hit the father, the son stood up and screamed. The kapo asked him why he was screaming. The son said that was his father. The kapo angrily started

to hit the father and the son together.

It was a **hard**, very cold winter in 1944. It snowed often. One night, I had to work the night shift in the tunnel. My assignment was to carry a telephone pole with another halfling. I could not carry the heavy pole. I fell down. Suddenly I heard, "Tailor, is that you?" It was my Spanish kapo for whom I used to do tailoring. He told me to wait a few minutes and that he would give me a different job. He took me to the German engineer's room. He said to the engineer, "This is my tailor. Give him some tailoring work." The engineer gave me his jacket to work on. The room was warm. I felt G-d's hand was in it. I will survive. I worked through the night for him.

The engineer was satisfied with my work and told me, "Tomorrow night, when you go out to work, come straight to my office and you will get more tailoring." Three nights I worked for him. On the fourth night, he sat down near me and said, "You look like a nice working man. Why are you in the concentration camp?" At first I did not want to answer. He continued to question me. "Are you a soldier who fought against the Germans?" I said no. There was more interrogation. In the end he looked at my striped jacket with the yellow strip and asked, "Are you Jewish?" I said, "Yes." He became very angry. He said, "Get the hell out of here you dirty Jew. The Jews are the biggest trouble in our life."

He was a civilian German engineer who was a supervisor responsible for the tunnel work. When I left the room, I felt deeply humiliated. He knew how good my work was. I worked for him through the nights but he hated me so much because I was a Jew. I tried so hard to do a good job. What would happen to me? How could I survive?

I felt my tears coming. When I lied down on my bunk, I was crying for myself and for all the inmates in the camp. In our suffering, who would help us if a civilian engineer treated me with such an arrogance and cruelty.

Since I was a child, my father always told me to be a hard honest worker. In the camp, I hardly had the strength in my great misery. But I always tried to do a good job. Now, I felt at the end of my rope. Every night I had to go out to the tunnel. The Spanish kapo saw that I was very weak and sad. He tried to help me. He gave me a little work, easier work, mixing cement with water.

One night at 1:00 AM, I was very tired. The day before, I did not sleep. There were many air raids throughout the day. I sat down and fell asleep. Suddenly, I felt somebody pulling my shirt. I was alarmed. I knew I would be in trouble, stopping from my work even for a few minutes meant sabotage. I looked up. A German civilian supervisor stood there. He took my number. I knew this meant a cruel punishment, 25 beatings on the backside with a rubber stick. He told me that now I could continue to sleep. He started to walk away. I followed him.

I took off my hat and said in a begging voice, "Bitteschön, I ask you don't give my number to the SS." At first, he refused to listen to me. My whole body trembled out of fear. What terrible things will happen to me? I knew in my weakened state that I could not survive those beatings. I started to cry. He looked at me and said, "I won't give your number to the SS." He took out his notebook and crossed out my number. I went back to my work and continued until 7:00 AM. Then we went back to the camp.

I thanked G-d that he helped me and that this fearful night was over and I am with life. Everyday it was a miracle just to survive in Ebensee. Very often, when we returned from the hard work in the tunnel, we had to line up by the appel, the roll call area. The barrack fuhrer checked us to see if we took anything from the tunnel, including cement or heavy paper bags which we used to warm ourselves up under our halfling uniforms.

The harsh winter in the Tirolian mountains made it difficult to survive. It snowed continuously. The hunger never stopped. One day, a

Russian kapo approached me. He heard I could do tailoring. He had a storage room outside of the tunnel. He told me he had material for a raincoat. He would stay with me in the room while I worked. His friend would lock the door from the outside. This way, nobody would suspect that we were there. We did not know that through the wooden panel, the light could be seen.

We heard steps on the rock and a voice in German said, "We will check if somebody is there." When the Russian kapo heard the SS talking, he closed the light and told me, "Don't move. Be very careful. Every move can cost us our life."

Meanwhile, the SS came closer and were knocking on the wooden wall. They saw the door was locked from the outside. One SS told the other, "You must have been dreaming." The other screamed, Herrgott sacrament." And they left. We waited 2 hours in the dark. Before dawn, the kapo's friend came and let us out.

Tailoring was so difficult as I had very few supplies. To press, I had to use some metal that was first held in a fire. With this makeshift iron I had to take care not to burn myself, nor the garment I was working on. Needles were scarce. Many times I would pin my needle on my uniform. When we went for disinfecting, we received different uniforms and then I would no longer have my needle.

I met Russian prisoners who were able to make me a needle out of wire. As I had no scissors, I used a knife for cutting, but when it dulled they helped sharpen it on rocks. Also, there was a constant threat of Russian sabotage of the tunnel pipes. When they went into the pipes, they would give me the inside coiling, which I used as thread.

In secrecy from the SS, us prisoners would barter at our own makeshift "marketplace", which in reality was the latrine. I sewed cigarettes into my pocket and traded them to Russian inmates for bread.

Our life was so often in danger. One day, I was in my block, Block II.

I heard a halfling arguing with Tony. He was a young Jewish man from Poland who was transferred to our block. He told Tony that he was in a better position in the other block. Tony became very angry because he refused to go to work in the tunnel. Tony hit him. The young man fell down, blood on his face. Tony tortured him with a hot iron and poured water from a water hose over him. He told me to step on his neck and dance on him. I refused. I said, "Tony, I can't." Tony said, "Aren't you afraid of me? I can kill you with him." I said, "He is my Jewish blood. I can't hurt him." Tony did not force me. He let me go away.

After the torture, the young man died. Fifty years later, I still see what happened before my eyes. I never can forget the cruelty with which Tony tortured this poor young man.

Jewish life was cheap. Not a single day would go by without trouble in the barracks. The SS hit us. I suffered from hunger so much. If I received a little food for tailoring, I always shared it with my friends. I always prayed to G-d, for health, because if anybody went to the hospital they never returned to the barracks. The sick did not get food. They all died.

One time I became ill with a stomach virus. I was very scared about what would happen to me. There was a Hungarian doctor. He said I must find from somewhere fresh garlic. I knew a German kapo, Carl, who I did some tailoring for. I told him I was in big trouble and needed garlic.

Everyday, he took workers to the town of Ebensee. He promised to bring me some. A few days later, he told me when no SS was around, that a woman from the town gave him some. I think this saved my life. My body was infected from the dirt and poor nourishment. I had a rash all over. Luckily, this occurred a short time before liberation.

The cruel treatment of the halflings continued at the camp. Twice a week, there were hangings in the appel place. After the hangings, the lager fuhrer told us, "This verdict came from Hitler." We had to remove

our hat and stand at attention.

My barrack was close to the fence and the watch tower. During the month of March, I overheard two Hungarian Nazis talking together. They said the war soon will be over and we would go home. When I heard this, I felt strength come to my body. I went to my friends to share the good news. They did not believe me, that freedom would come soon.

I also heard in the barrack office, from Anthony Opcsareg, the schreiber, *secretary*, that Budapest was liberated by the Russian army. When I went out to work in the tunnel the following day, I was behind the fence. I saw 2 SS following us. Next to me came a halfling also from Hungary. He said to me, "I can't survive any longer. I am too weak and tired." I wanted to encourage him. I told him in Hungarian that I heard the good news, that Budapest was liberated and he should not worry as we would soon be free.

The moment I said this, the SS turned to me and asked me in Hungarian, "Repeat what you just said." One pulled out his gun and aimed it at me. I became scared and ran into the middle of the large group of people. He could not shoot me, surrounded by so many others. I was safe, but my heart was racing.

In April, many things changed at the camp. Generally, the SS used the Heil Hitler with raised hands when they met each other. One day, they stopped. We did not know what happened. In the middle of April, Tony called me to his office and told me he was leaving the camp. I did not know what to think, what happened. I told him, "I am working for you. What will happen to me now?" He said to come to his office the next day at 1:00 PM, I went to Tony's office. When I knocked on the door, Tony answered, "Come in." I saw there an older man. Tony told him, "Shake hands with this man, he is my tailor." After the handshake, I took off my hat to give him respect. Tony told him, "Take good care of him.

From now on he will work for you." Tony left. The man became the barrack fuhrer. I did not know where Tony went. I did not understand what was happening.

The new barrack fuhrer made changes. He treated the halflings better. I did tailoring for him. He gave me some food. During the first days of May, the night shift continued. I worked the day shift. In the evening till late at night, I did tailoring. My friend woke me up early morning. He asked if I heard the news, that the war was over. It was May 3.

I went to the schreiber, the secretary of the barrack. I told him the good news, the war is over. He said, "Are you crazy? I didn't hear nothing." He stood up, took his books and went to the main office. I knew him well. When he was in a good mood he would whistle. I waited by the back door for his return. He was whistling. When he saw me, he said, "Schneider, you were right. The war is over." I replied, "You can be happy because you are not Jewish. But I am afraid because the lager fuhrer said if any changes or liberation came, he would kill all the Jews." He said, "Schneider, don't worry. He won't have time to kill you."

In the camp, the work stopped. Nobody went to the tunnel. It was May 4. Every barrack fuhrer went to his barrack and said, "Don't eat the food. There are slivers of glass baked inside the bread. Don't go to the tunnel because there is dynamite and they want to blow up the tunnel so that you all will die there."

We were scared how the liberation would happen. In the morning, we heard over the loud speaker, "Everybody to the appel place. Line up." The SS lager fuhrer stood up on the stage. He told us, "From today, you are free, but I have one request. I am responsible for your life. I want you to be safe, so go to the tunnel and wait there for the liberators."

We did what our barrack fuhrer told us. We raised our hands and said loudly that we do not want to go to the tunnel. We would wait in our barracks. The lager fuhrer said, "You may stay in your barracks, but if

you try to escape from the camp or you hurt any SS soldier, we will go up and from an airplane we will kill you all." We went back to the barracks.

We heard that a high ranking SS officer gave the orders to the barrack fuhrers, which saved our lives. I remember, I would see him when I was working on tailoring jobs, in the little room. He went to check the barracks. I always jumped up to stand in salute and took off my hat. He always showed me to sit down. He saved over 17,000 people.

I heard after the liberation that he visited other camps too. In the last weeks of April, he gave orders which saved the inmates. During the first week of May, the entire SS unit left the camp. He stayed till the liberators came.

We lay on our bunk beds. We could not sleep. The morning of May 5, we looked outside. We saw Wermacht soldiers in the watch tower. No more SS. They were gone. There was no electricity in the fence. The Wermacht assured us that our lives were not in danger. They said to be patient. Everything would be alright. We were very hungry. We stayed in our barracks. For 2 days we were without food. At night, we did not sleep. We were lying on the bed. The morning of May 6, the Wermacht left the watch tower.

We later learned that the towns people were afraid that us prisoners would come down from the camp and take revenge on them. They made sure the American troops knew that we were up in the mpuntains, a place that seemed too high to hold a concentration camp.

Austrian civilians patrolled the camp. They told us to stay quiet and wait because today would be the day of our liberation. At 11:00 AM, the civilian patrol told us the American liberators arrived at Ebensee in tanks. We all went out, carrying the sick on our backs, and waited at the big gate. By 1:00 PM the gate was opened and 3 American tanks

came to the appel place.

We surrounded the tanks. The soldiers could not come out. Finally, one halfling went up to the tanks and brought out one soldier. He was crying as he looked at us. Slowly, all the soldiers came out from the tanks. We went closer. We wanted to hug them. They emptied their pockets and gave us chocolates, candy, whatever they had. The Americans walked around the camp. When they saw the sick inmates, who just lied there, their eyes filled up with tears and sorrow. Orders were given to remove the dead from the barracks.

Horse-drawn wagons stood before the barracks and hundreds of lifeless bodies were taken away. These poor souls were buried in nameless graves in Ebensee.

We, the innocent victims of the evil SS machinery, tired and hungry, were standing at the appel place. The sun was shining. I was in a daze. My only thought was that I am a free man. I went up to a tank and sat down close to the liberator. I did not speak English. I shook his hand.

Our liberators were really here. He was nice to me. His looks expressed so much understanding. He hugged me. Toward evening, the people became restless. Fights broke out between halflings and the kapos who were cruel to them. Everyone was beaten up. In the evening, army trucks came in and brought us food. One soldier on the truck told us that he was a Jew and we should sing the national anthem. We sang the Hatikva.

In the evening, we went down to the town of Ebensee. We found a shoe factory storage room. I put on a pair of shoes and took two other pairs back to my friends. We looked around and found a large barrel of sauerkraut. Later we heard shots in the air. We got scared, but this was the liberators who stood in the middle of the street and told us by a loud speaker to stop and return to the barracks. It was late at night when we got back. I remember going to sleep so fast on this first day of my liberation.

When I awoke the next morning, I looked out at the watch tower and the appel place. No more SS. I was assured that I was a free man. I went down to Ebensee. In the middle of the town, there was a river. I took off my prison uniform and threw it into the water. It was full of lice. I covered myself with a blanket and went to a private house with my friend.

We knocked on the door. An Austrian man looked at us. He told us that he was waiting for his son to come home. He invited us inside. We told him we needed some clothing. His wife went to the closet. She found us pants and jackets. I also got from him a railroad hat. He told us to sit down with them and have something to eat at the table. I felt like a human being again. I understood the German language. We talked. I thanked him. He told me they forced his son into the army. We left.

On the way to the camp, we met 3 American soldiers, one white and 2 black. They were so good to us. Whatever they had, they shared with us. Through a translator, they assured us that we now had the freedom that was robbed from us and we did not have to be afraid for our future.

At the camps, we saw the horse-drawn wagons carrying the bodies of our fellow halflings. They never were given the care to survive. The American army brought in heavy bulldozers to build an emergency hospital. All the sick people got treatment. But for a large group of people, the liberators came too late. I went to the hospital. I had a rash all over my body. They treated it with creams. I received good food. My life normalized.

One day, the American liberators brought the statue of Hitler to the camp. We took sticks and we all hit it. The soldiers were laughing. A high ranking American officer told us through a translator, "Don't go back to Hungary. Your parents were killed in Auschwitz. Nobody will come home to you. Go to Palestine or to the United States."

I was in Auschwitz. I saw the fire from the chimneys but I could not believe that they were burning people. The man who worked at the

crematorium told us that our clothes were burning.

I wanted to go back to Hungary, to wait for my sisters and brothers. I had hope that I would be reunited with my family. Five weeks after liberation, my strength started to return. I registered with a group to go to Hungary. The liberators made the transport with trucks. A woman officer took our group and came with us to the border, near Mathausen.

She said goodbye to us. With those words, she blessed us and said, "May G-d give you the strength to forget your suffering." When we said goodbye, we all wiped away our tears. The Russian army personnel took us to the train. My only belongings were 2 army blankets.

After 3 days, we arrived in Budapest. The HIAS waited for us at the railroad station. I also met friends from the camp. I heard that Tony was killed in Gurzkirchen. I met my cousin in Budapest. We decided to go back to my village of Nagydobos.

The train, after a long delay, arrived at Kisvarda, a little town 20 miles from my village. The train stopped for an hour at the station. A young girl with a basket in her hand came up to my car and asked us, "Are you hungry? Would you like a sandwich?" My cousin took one. I looked at her. Her smile warmed up my heart. I started to talk to her, with tears and crying I told her I wanted to go home but I did not know if I would find anyone from my family. She said, "Don't worry, I will help you. Come with me. I will take you to my cousin's house. You and your cousin will have supper and stay overnight."

So we went with her. When I thanked her in the morning, I asked for her address. I felt that I wanted to see her again.

After reaching my village and speaking to people, I learned that nobody came home from my family. Our house was empty. There were wooden boards on the floor. Somebody had been digging under the floor.

Neighbors came, brought over food and invited me to their homes. I had no furniture. Everything was taken so I accepted an invitation from

some people who were nice to us during our persecution.

After a week, a man came. He saved our cat. I went over there on a bicycle. I was happy to see our gray cat again. And she had two babies. The cat was ours and belonged to my family. I put her in a bag with the 2 little kittens and took her home. I opened the bag. She started to run away. Then she recognized the house. She walked back and sat down.

I waited for news about my family. I fixed up my home. News came in August. My brothers, Miklos, Moritz and Irwing, and my older sister Elisabeth survived. Everyday seemed so long. When they arrived home, it was one of the happiest days in my life. We held each other, crying. I had family once again.

I lost 2 brothers, 2 sisters and my parents, 6 people from my family. From the village, many old and young people, my 2 uncles, 2 aunts and their family, my cousins, never came back. Life was very hard for me in the summer months. I remembered the cruelty, the gendarme and the people who belonged to the Arrow Cross, nyilas party. I went to the neighboring villages and we, the survivors, made a list of the people who mistreated us.

We gave their names over to a lawyer. We wanted the guilty to be brought to justice. After a very short time, I received a call from the Hungarian army that I had to serve. I did not understand why they sent for me. I was still tired and weak from the camps.

In a hurry, I packed my suitcase, left my brothers and sister and alone again, I started my journey. I went to Budapest. There I applied to a Jewish organization. They assured me that they would help me to leave Hungary. A week later, I was on my way to Vienna with a large group of young men and women. We all were survivors of the Holocaust.

In Vienna, we stayed in the basement of the Rothschild Hospital. After a few weeks, we were transferred to Peking. After 3 days there,

I became very sick. I had food poisoning. I had to check into the hospital of Bergen Belsen. I was very scared because I heard that many doctors belonged during the war to the Hungarian Arrow Cross and to the German SS.

How would I be treated, as a Jew? I feared persecution. The doctors, though, were caring medical professionals and were nice to me. After a short time, I felt better. I joined a Zionist organization. We had Hebrew classes and studied Jewish history.

A few months later, we received false identification cards and went to Belgium by train. Following a few days stay in Brussels, we went to Gent. There, we met a large transport, a group of 500 people and soon left for Antwerp, where the ship, the Chajal Chivri, waited for us.

There was a big celebration with music. The mayor of Antwerp was the guest speaker. We felt grateful for his warm greetings and good wishes. We left Belgium during the spring of 1946. We were on our way to Palestine. We had a hard time on the ship. The waves were high. We became sea sick. It was overcrowded. There was not enough food. We could not take a shower.

When we reached Gibraltar, the English army checked our ships with projectors. We hid in the lower level of the ship while going through the canal. When we were close to Palestine, the English police boat was out on patrol from Haifa.

They stopped our ship. We had a large sign which read, "Our goal is Eretz Yisrael , the Land of the Jewish people." We already saw the Carmel Mountains of Haifa. The Histadrut representative came with boats. We were told to obey the English police. A ship came towards us, the Hagana. We had to change ships because ours was sinking. The English police captured a ship and took the passengers to Cypress. Our ship was the last to enter the Haifa Harbor. Towards evening, we saw the lights of Haifa. We were happy that we reached Eretz Yisrael. We were

welcomed by a delegate of the Histadrut.

They brought us food on the ship. A few days later, the British took us to Camp Atlit. Palestinian soldiers were guarding us. We were upset. We lost our freedom. We were surrounded by a fence. The life at Atlit was hard. The English police and the Arab guards humiliated us. We felt we had the right to be in our land. After the hardship of the war, we needed a home where we could rebuild our lives.

After 6 weeks, we were free to go. I joined a settlement. Life was hard for me. I did not know Hebrew well. In my line of work as a tailor, I could not find employment. I felt lonely. I remembered the young girl I met at the railroad station. I wrote her, asking her to come to Israel.

In 1947, I received training in the Hagana. I was in a group of young men from Hungary. We became good friends. In 1948, May, Israel became a state. But war broke out, the War of Independence. I was sent near to the town of Tulkerem. After a few weeks in the war, I was injured. I lost my good friends. Three young men died near to me. I was taken to Natanya, to an army hospital. My fiancée came in June of 1948. We got married in September. I found a job as a factory foreman.

When our first son, Yehuda, was born in 1950, I felt the triumph over my haters and thanked G-d. When our second child, Arnon, was born in 1957, it was like a miracle that G-d blessed us with 2 children, and later their wives, Ellie and Michelle.

Today, when we celebrate holidays with our children and grandchildren, David, Cheryl and Joelle, we feel very fortunate and thank G-d for helping us have a family again.

As I wrote down our story and relived again the horrors of the Holocaust, after 50 years, the pain was still there. During the war years, we had the physical pain, the hunger, the fear of what would happen to us. We went through so much suffering. We were so weak, we could not think,

our bodies were hurt.

After liberation, we waited for our family to return. They did not come back, our parents, brothers and sisters, we lost in Auschwitz. We were mourning them. We never can visit their graves. For those people who helped us to survive, we are grateful. There were people who in their own little ways helped our family during the ghetto, giving my parents a little dignity. And the people who were good to us after the camp, we will always remember them.

But in my heart, I am feeling pain and with sadness I am asking why weren't there more people willing to help us, when we were so miserable and alone. We are all G-d's children. Love, respect and understanding must control our lives. It is a shame for civilization what happened in the 20th century.

Future generations must remember to work hard for peace. The real treasure which we can give to our children and grandchildren is that we must teach them the G-d given law, love thy neighbor.

Here is the account of my liberator of May 6, 1945 and what he saw in Ebensee.

